

PLAYERS
GUIDE TO

COMPUTER WARGAMES

MORE THAN
35 PAGES
OF ARTICLES, REVIEWS
AND NEWS ABOUT
COMPUTERS

electronic GAMES

MARCH, 1984 • \$2.95

Computer Games • Videogames • Stand-Alone Games • Arcades

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Some Thrive While
Others Struggle to
Stay In the Race

CAN ELECTRONIC
GAMING SURVIVE
THE BIG
SHAKE-OUT?

COLECOVISION
VS. ATARI 5200
One Year Later

THE CHALLENGE
OF ZORK

FURNITURE
FOR GAMERS



It'll blow your mine

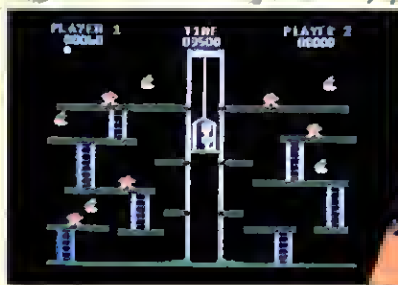
Electronic Game
of the Year



You and Mounty Bounty Bob follow the notorious Yukon Yohan into the depths of an abandoned uranium mine. But before you can capture him, you've got to maneuver through 10 increasingly difficult levels of traps, tricks and lethal challenges.

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**Created by
David Schroeder**

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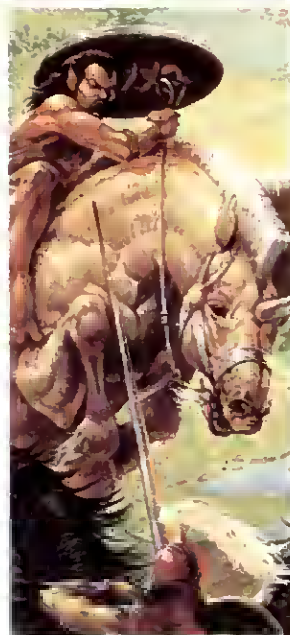
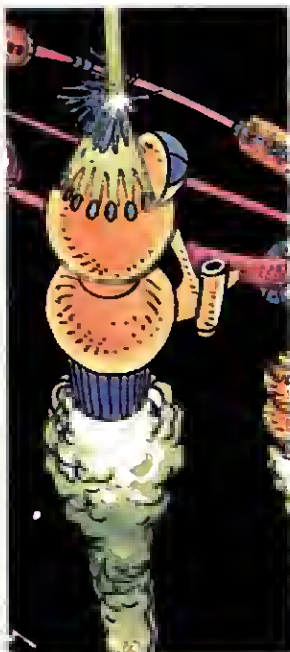
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electronic GAMES

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Commodore is the best computer value in town...at home, at school and at work... with our exciting, easy to use, inexpensive VIC 20 and C64 computers.

We're fast becoming the best game in town when it comes to entertainment for the whole family...and at affordable prices.

THE BEST ARCADE IN TOWN can be in your own home with our exciting, faithful reproductions of the

best of Bally Midway arcade games. Our **Kickman**, (which just received a coveted "Electronic Games" award for an arcade translation) lets you steer the unicycle to catch the falling objects, as they fall quicker and quicker!!

Gorf, Lazarian, and Omega Race give you the best in classic space action against the one-eyed leviathan, the droids or the evil Empire.

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to defeat the Wizard and the Warriors, fighting your way through to the end. With the new Commodore "MAGIC VOICE"... It talks back to you too!!

You commandeer the fleet at sea with our version of **Seawolf**, and become the master tactician as you battle "it out" with enemy fleet.

Clowns and **Blueprint** round out our arcade entertainment package to keep your fingers nimble and your mind in gear.

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COMPUTERS

First In Quality Software

See your local dealer now... He's got the best game in town... just for you.



A Prescription for Survival

By ARNIE KATZ

This issue's lead story analyzes the combination of pressures which led to the Big Videogame Shake-Out. Unfortunately, even this magazine isn't completely immune. The seismic shocks which turned the gaming business upside down in recent months have also rattled the walls of our editorial offices.

A high level of support from readers and advertisers insures that EG won't have to follow the many marginal and imitative game and computer publications which have already made the journey to the Big Newsstand in the Sky. And make no mistake, many of the over 100 computer titles introduced in late 1983 will vanish as melted snow by the spring. At least 10 titles are competing for every display advertising spot, so you can bet that a lot of them will never escape that clutter alive.

Electronic gaming is in the midst of a delicate transition. The videogaming era is winding down, while home arcading with microcomputers is just entering its main growth spurt. Companies that once targeted their ads at the installed base of 15 million videogame systems must now scale down their efforts, at least temporarily, be-

cause fewer than five million households have personal computers at this writing.

Electronic Games magazine must make some changes in order to continue to serve the hobby effectively without compromising the standards of quality, excellence, and accuracy that have made EG far and away the number one "must read" for electronic gamers. Accordingly, we have decided to trim the schedule rather than do anything which would diminish or adulterate the contents of the magazine. EG will temporarily publish every other month and we plan to return to our regular monthly schedules during the fall of 1984. That is why this issue is dated March 1984 instead of February. Your next issue will be dated May 1984. All subscribers will receive the exact number of issues they paid for so no one gets short changed. This move, coupled with some general belt-tightening, will enable EG to ride out the storm in good shape — and give the magazine the basis for expansion once computer hardware and software sales begin to approach the volume once attained by videogames paraphernalia.

Our new schedule will allow EG to serve the hobby as it has


since 1981 by concentrating issues in the months when most new products appear, while giving the industry time to assess its position and move forward in both new product development and promotion.

You say every other month isn't enough EG during the spring? One thing you can do is subscribe to our bi-weekly newsletter, **Electronic Games Hotline**. You'll get all the news, inside scoops, and reviews any hard-core gamer could desire.

You, the readers, can also help the magazine weather the current choppy seas. For instance, remember to ask for EG at your favorite newsstand — and make sure they know you're disappointed if it isn't there. And tell your friends about EG, too, in case they aren't yet familiar with it.

Most of all, keep telling folks about your own enthusiasm for electronic gaming. Let people know you participate in the world's fastest-growing hobby.

And when gaming emerges from this period of readjustment, and the sales curve again soars toward the stratosphere, we'll all look back on the Big Shake-Out and its consequences as a colorful sidelight of the hobby's formative years.

See you in two months! 

Volume Two, Number Twelve
March, 1984

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Electronic Game
of the Year



YOU'VE GOT TO DIG DEEP TO FIND A MORE EXCITING GAME THAN MINER 2049ER.™

Now, Reston brings Commodore VIC-20™ and Commodore 64™ owners one of the hottest home computer games ever created—*Miner 2049er*™. Help the legendary Mountie, Bounty Bob™ chase the dastardly Yukon Yohan through an abandoned uranium mine—all ten levels of it. But you've got to avoid the deadly radioactive mutants. And watch out for pulverizers, explosives, slides and falls. And grab all the treasure you can along the way. And beat the clock. Any computer game you've played up to now has just been practice for *Miner 2049er*™. It's fast and furious, a gold mine of action for the serious computer gamer. And Commodore VIC-20™ and Commodore 64™ owners can get it only from Reston.

A Creative Pastime™ from

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HOTLINE



TI has cashed in its home computer chips.

TI DUMPS 99/4A

As a result of lagging sales that resulted in a staggering \$200 million-plus loss in the first three quarters of 1983, Texas Instruments officially halted production on the TI 99/4A.

The company, which also makes computers and electronic equipment for the United States government, says it will continue to support existing 99/4As.

Following the announcement, Texas Instruments registered a substantial gain in stock prices, and the newly-discounted computers (the price fell overnight to about

\$50) practically flew out of the stores. Software for the now-defunct system was reportedly selling briskly as TI 99/4A owners hurried to stockpile games and programs.

Oddly enough, a few weeks before TI made their announcement, they were promoting a new group of releases — many of which were designed by third-party software manufacturers. Among the titles being released are **Super Demon Attack**, **Jawbreaker II** and **BurgerTime**. A TI spokesman says that the titles will be made available.

SUPER DEMON ATTACK (TI)



PROGRAM VCS CARTRIDGES

VSS, the company that developed **Mountain King** for CBS Electronics, is offering their complete game development system to potential game designers everywhere. The Rom Emulator and Development System, priced at just under \$800, lets Atari 800

owners develop their own cartridge games for the Atari VCS. VIC-20 games can also be programmed, using a special adapter. For information, write to VSS Inc., 2829 W. Northwest Hwy., Courtyard Suite 904, Dallas, TX 75220. Mention you read it here.



VSS' program development system.

WELCOME BACK, NOLAN BUSHNELL

After a seven-year hiatus from the videogame business, Atari founder Nolan Bushnell is back in the ballgame. His Pizza Time Theater's new coin-op division, Sente (pronounced Sen-tay) is aptly named — whereas Atari is the Japanese word for *check* (as in a chess game), Sente translates to *checkmate*.

Bushnell's seven-year agreement with Atari expired on Oct. 1, 1983, and after

settling Atari's recent lawsuit and selling his former company the home cartridge rights to future releases, the way was cleared to start production of brand-new coin-ops.

Sente's first game releases should start popping up in each of the 260 Chuck E. Cheese's Pizza Time Theaters around the country, as well as the local arcades, any day now.

Nolan Bushnell has ended his exile.





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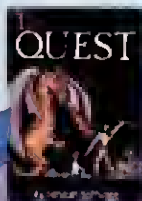
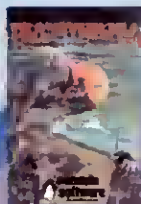
the graphics people

The Next Generation Is Here!

Strategy



Exciting Adventures



Arcade Fun



Fantasy Role Playing



Games for Apple, Atari, Commodore, and IBM computers

At Penguin, we don't rely on the same old game formulas, adding to the mish-mash of look-alike games already on the market. We look for creativity, originality, and innovation. Games like **Minit Man**, challenging you with two types of arcade action simultaneously; **Coveted Mirror**, an adventure with animation and arcade games throughout; **The Spy Strikes Back**, an arcade game with strategy and a touch of adventure; **Pensate** and **Tactic 9**, games that make you think; and **Expedition Amazon**, an intriguing and humorous fantasy game.

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ARCADER PROGRAMS HIS OWN

Arcade ace Tony Snyder — last seen setting two world's records (one for highest score on Q*bert — 25,694,985 — and one for longest time playing an arcade videogame — 57 hours, 12 minutes, 18 seconds) is now looking at electronic games from the opposite side of the fence.



Tony Snyder shows winning form on Q*bert.

Tony recently founded WaterWares, his own software company, and is busily working up his own original games for the venture. His first game, entitled **Tunneling**, is currently available for the Timex Sinclair 1000, and will soon make its debut for the VIC-20 — with the Commodore 64 next in line.

HOTLINE



"MR. PINBALL" DIES

Harry Williams, founder of Williams Electronics, died September 11, 1983, in Palm Springs, California. Mr. Williams started Williams Manufacturing in 1941 and ran the company for ten years. More recently, he had worked for Stern Electronics as a consultant, where he designed **Flight 2000**.

In the last couple of years, Mr. Williams worked at home due to a lengthy illness. He was 74 years old when he passed away.

In addition to founding the prestigious company that bears his name, Mr. Williams was the inventor of the flipper and the tilt on pinball machines, and has often been called the Father of Modern Arcading.

ARCADIE MACHINE CONTEST STARTS

Broderbund Software's Arcade Machine contest for Atari computer users started

January 1st and will run through June 30th. Home computerists can design an original arcade game using the *Arcade Machine* program. There's a winner each month, then the six finalists are eligible for the grand prize — \$1500 worth of hardware and software. Contest details are packaged with the *Arcade Machine* program, or can be obtained direct from Broderbund, 17 Paul Dr., San Rafael, Ca. 94903.

CALLING DECATHLON CHAMPS

Tops at Activision's Decathlon? A contest sponsored by Championship Electronics in association with Electronic

Games will give you the chance to prove it and to win \$5,000, a gold medal and a lifetime subscription to *Electronic Games*.

After getting an official entry form from a specially marked Super Champ joystick carton, all you've got to do to win is send in your best 10-event total with proper authentication. The top five scorers will be flown to Los Angeles, site of this year's summer Olympics, for the finals. Just as in the real-life sporting event, the second and third finishers will receive, respectively, silver and bronze medals. Unlike the actual Olympics, coming in second earns you \$2,000 and a one-year EG subscription, while finishing third is worth \$1,000 in cash and a free year of EG.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENTERING ELECTRONIC OLYMPIAD DECATHLON CONTEST

HOW TO ENTER:

1. Obtain a Decathlon game cartridge made by Activision.
2. Use your Super Champ to get your best score for each of the 10 events.
3. Record your BEST SCORE by filling out the official SCORE CARD.
4. Take a picture of your final points total. (This screen is shown after you have completed the 10 events in succession.)
5. Send Item 3 and 4, along with proof-of-purchase seal: Model Number JC-250 (this can be obtained by cutting the Model Number JC-250 on the Giftbox), and sales receipt to:

CHAMPIONSHIP ELECTRONICS (U.S.A.), INC. 711 Grandview Drive, South S.F., CA 94080.

6. If your scores are good enough to be in the TOP 5, we will print your score in the April, May and June issue of *Electronic*

Games. On May 1, 1984, we will announce the names of the 5 winners*, who automatically win a free trip to Los Angeles, California, for the final competition.

* Minors must be accompanied by one parent, expenses compliments of Championship Electronics.

PRIZES:

Grand prize will be a GOLD medal, \$5,000 in cash and a lifetime subscription to *Electronic Games*.

2nd prize will be a SILVER medal, \$2,000 in cash and a one-year subscription to *Electronic Games*. 3rd prize will be a BRONZE medal, \$1,000 in cash and a one-year subscription to *Electronic Games*.

RULES:

1. Employees of Championship Electronics and their families are not eligible to enter.
2. Entries must be post-marked no later than April 31, 1984.

IBM is hoping the mass market will love the PCjr.



PCjr — OUT OF ITS SHELL AT LAST

By this time, the first PCjrs, affectionately known as the Peanut, have found their way into gamer's homes. For those of you who haven't seen one yet, the jr comes in two versions. The entry model is a 64K machine with two cartridge slots (Atari, are you listening?), two joystick ports and the usual interface

options. The enhanced version includes a disk drive, an additional 64K and DOS 2.1. Both models sport a cordless keyboard. Three of the titles being offered are: **Mouser**, **Crossfire** and **Animation Creation**. There are also educational programs for pre-schoolers and those of us who may be older.

WICO COMMAND CONTROL™



Bat Handle Joystick

WHY TOP PLAYERS ARE GOING WHACKO OVER WICO.

You know the feeling.
It's happened before.

Your score and initials are in lights on the arcade scoreboard. You've once again experienced the incredible response from the arcade controls to your own hand and mind.

You've been part of the WICO response.

Over 500 arcade games use WICO controls. And now those authentic arcade controls can be used with home video games.

WICO engineers ergonomically designed home joysticks with the same precise feel and response as the arcade joystick. Joysticks that truly fit the hand and the mind.

The "Bat Handle" and the "Famous Red Ball™" The new "Power Grip™" And the "Three Way Deluxe Joystick"

that lets you change handles as easily as you change video games.

WICO features two fire buttons instead of the usual one. Rubber grips keep

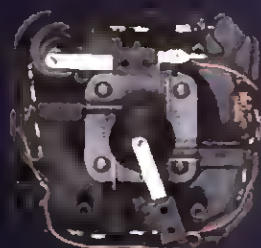


Quick-action fire button

the base from slipping. And, of course, every handle is arcade size for the best grip.

If you opened up the base of a Wico joystick, you'd see one thing. It's not a toy! Arcade owners have always demanded the finest in design, engineering and durability. And so should you.

Our electronically designed "guts" feature 6 Wico leaf switches instead of bubble-type switches. Our joysticks "exclusively" feature a Wico rubber diaphragm module for authentic arcade action and feel. And like all Wico controls, the base is made of heavy-duty, high impact ABS plastic construction that makes it virtually indestructible.



Unique WICO 6-leaf switch assembly

Wico brings 42 years of experience and know-how to the development of the world's finest joysticks. Arcade accuracy. Arcade control. Arcade durability. You're always in command with WICO.



Three-Way Deluxe Joystick



WICO
THE SOURCE

FOR THE ARCADE—
AND NOW FOR THE HOME.

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WICO AIDS OHIO SCHOOL

WICO Corporation found a way to combine good business with good deeds when the Norton, Ohio school system appealed to them for donations of joysticks for its computer labs.

"If we had to depend on existing school budgets to put this program together we couldn't have afforded one joystick," explains a spokesman for the Norton schools. WICO responded with an arrangement that helped the schools and its own design staff, by providing 40 WICO Computer Command analog joysticks for use in the classes.

HOTLINE



Wico's The Boss (left) and Command Control are very popular.



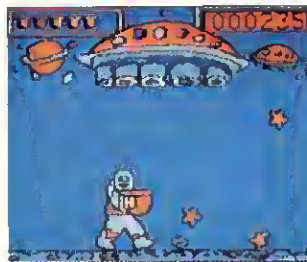
The supplier worked with the students to perfect the controller for the Radio Shack TRS-80 Color Computer. The students tested the sticks through the development period, and the school ended up with a supply of controllers.

David McCauley, one of the Norton educators working on the computer curriculum, expressed the school's gratitude by saying, "Thanks to a business partnership with such companies as WICO, we have been able to provide our students with a computer program which is, today, a necessary part of the educational mix."

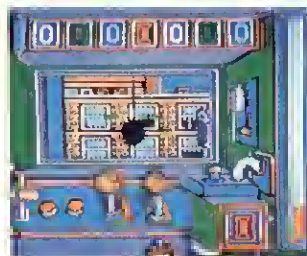
SOFTWARE BEAT

North American Philips has shelved plans for three ColocoVision cartridges due to a shortage of computer chips. **Lord of the Dungeon**, **Power Lords** and **Pink Panther**, originally scheduled for pre-Christmas release under NAP's new Probe 2000 label, have been delayed until the company gets a dependable supply of the needed microchips. . . .

Xerox's Weekly Reader Family Software Division's seven new games include three action titles for all ages,



BASKET BOUNCE (XEROX)



FAT CITY (XEROX)

in addition to the line of educational products. **Stickybear Basketbounce** is a colorful catching game. **Chivalry** combines a board game with computerized skill tests, and

Fat City pits a wrecking crew against angry, garbage-can-throwing tenants. . . .

Romox has begun testing the market for electronic soft-

test for VIC-ers, as they try to find twin shapes concealed behind boxes. Other hits scheduled for the VIC include **Cannonball Blitz**, the American Revolution game; the

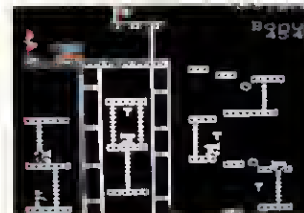


This Romox unit allows electronic game distribution.

ware distribution with Romox terminals in retail locations in California. Each terminal has a capacity of 500 titles or more. Gamers can buy a title, play with it until they're ready for a new game, then take the old cart back to the store for re-programming with a new contest. . . .

Sierra On-Line will produce nine action games for the VIC-20, including two original titles in this format. **Ultima II: Escape From Mt. Drash** gives the player dual viewpoints on a split screen. The gamer plays a captive trying to escape from a dungeon, battling monsters who can't be tamed by his magic spells. **Flip-N-Match** is a memory

much admired **Jawbreaker**, **Threshold**, **Crossfire**, **Lunar Leapers**, **Creepy Corridors**, and last but not least, the



CANNONBALL BLITZ (SIERRA ON-LINE)



JAWBREAKER II (SIERRA ON-LINE)



ULTIMA II (SIERRA ON-LINE)

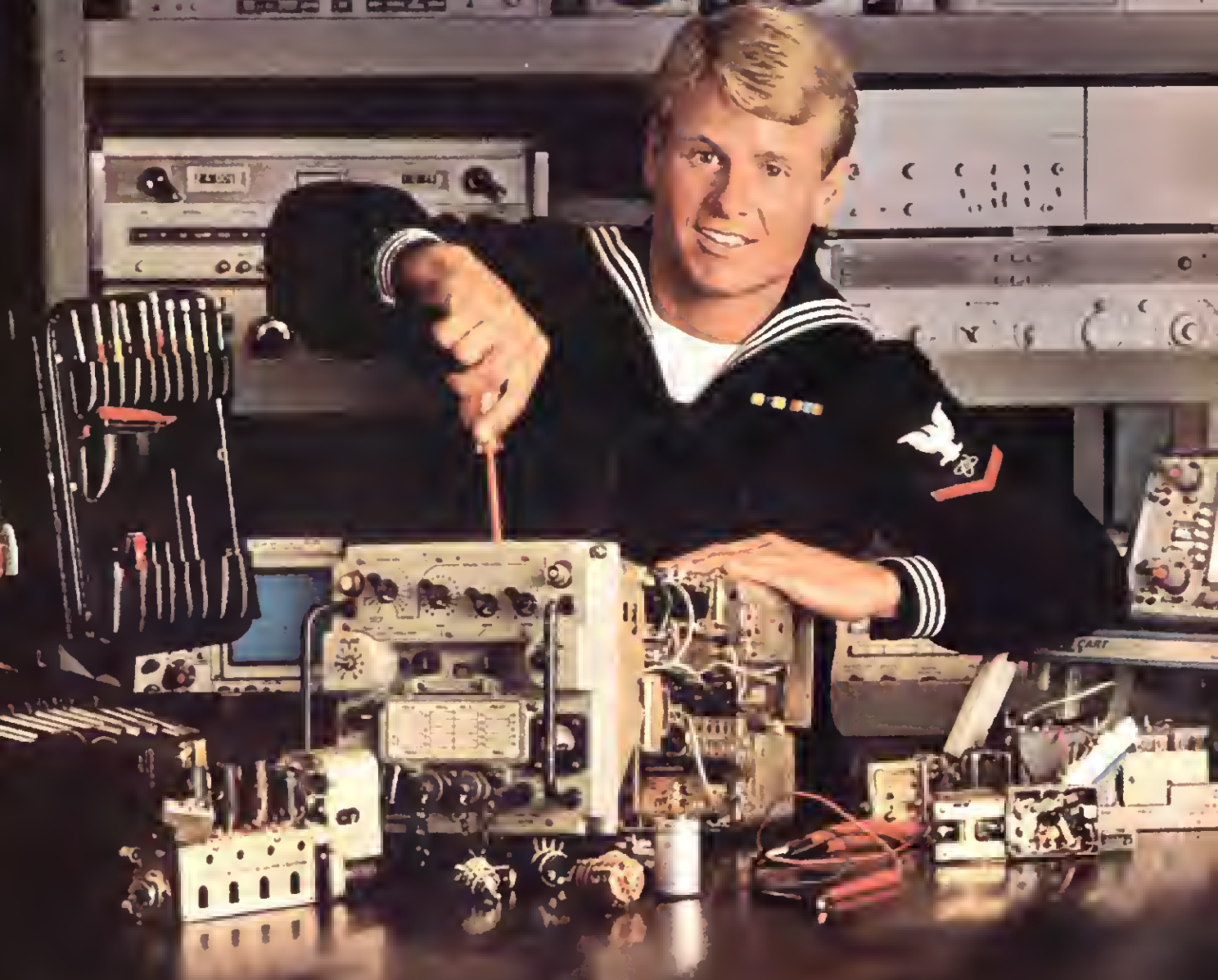
popular hit action game, **Frogger**. . . .

CBS Electronics' **Omega Race** offers a special bonus for gamers — a free BOOSTER-GRIP Joystick Adaptor that comes packed with the game, and is said to improve the



OMEGA RACE (CBS ELECTRONICS) gamer's control. **Omega Race** features the RAM PLUS Power Chip, for the Atari 2600. The extra memory is needed to keep up the frenetic pace of this space chase based on the Bally Midway pay-for-play game that inspired it. The player has to ricochet off the walls using his ship's thrust, to defeat the Omegan fleet of space assassins. . . .

New Challenges Are Part Of The Navy Adventure.



Every day as a Navy specialist you encounter new challenges, new tests of your rapidly growing technical skills.

And you're ready. Because the Navy Adventure begins with first-class training. Training that's tough, demanding, and extensive. Navy classroom training that prepares you to meet the new challenges that are part of today's important technical

skills. Then, practical hands-on experience helps you master the job you chose.

In the Navy you can choose the technical career you want to learn. Pick from today's hottest technologies: micro-electronics, state-of-the-art computers, advanced communications, nuclear power, and more. There are over 60 career areas, 75,000 technical jobs a year. One of

them can be yours.

Along with a high-tech career comes the highest Navy pay ever. Starting pay is over \$550 a month plus housing, food, medical and dental care, special pay for sea duty, and 30 days' vacation earned each year.

Find out more about the new challenges and new rewards you get in today's Navy. Call 800-327-NAVY, toll-free, today.

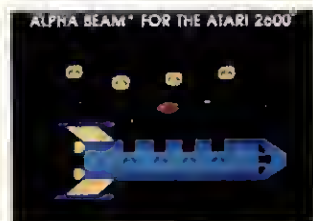
Navy. It's Not Just A Job, It's An Adventure.

ATARI GOES TO SESAME STREET

Atari and Children's Computer Workshop, an arm of CTW (the creators of Sesame Street) recently announced the release of their group of educational software for the Atari 2600. The three titles — **Cookie Monster Munch**, **Big Bird's Egg Catch** and **Alpha Beam With Ernie** — teach such things as letter recog-



COOKIE MONSTER MUNCH (ATARI)



ALPHA BEAM (ATARI)

nition, directional skills and visual tracking. All of the software requires a specially designed keypad. Needless to say, both the hardware and the software were extensively tested and given the same love and care that goes into the television program.

HOTLINE



DYNASTY SMART-ALEC JR.

DYNASTY IS GIVING AWAY FREE EQUIPMENT

The next time your doorbell rings, it may be a door-to-door salesman with an offer you won't get everyday. Dynasty Computer Corp., Dallas, Tx., is offering a free Dynasty Smart-ALEC Jr. microcomputer with the purchase of any 25 pieces of Dynasty software. The company markets microcomputers through a network of over 3,250 independent distributors who sell the machine through in-home demonstrations, a la Avon or Stanley Products. Now they're giving away a 4K Smart-ALEC Jr.,

complete with a 16K memory expansion module to bring the usable memory up to 20K to anyone purchasing at least 25 software programs. The machine has color graphics, music capability, is expandable to 64K, and is CP/M compatible. The average cost of 25 programs, picked from the company's large catalog of their own software designs, is about \$390.

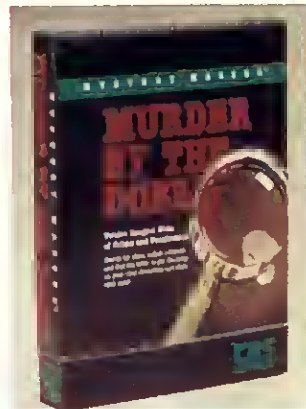
For more information, contact Ms. Bobbie Weis, Dynasty Computer Corp., 14240 Midway Rd., Dallas, Tx. 75234, or call 214-386-8634.



Menu allows gamers to choose from 12 cases.

CBS SOFTWARE LOVES A MYSTERY

Hoping to make a real kill-in with a challenging new mystery game for the Apple II computer is CBS Software. **Murder by the Dozen**, the first title in a projected series of "Mystery Master" programs, tests the sleuthing abilities of one to four computerists on a



MURDER BY THE DOZEN (CBS)

dozen different cases.

Although CBS Software officials declined to discuss the publisher's plans in detail, a spokesman did state that this would be the first in a series of such mystery challenges, should this first one prove to be very popular.

CONSUMER BEAT

Apple Corporation has cut the price for the Lisa computer to \$8200. This includes a printer and six software packs, but the hardware can be purchased alone for about \$7000. . . .

Amiga reduced the price of the Joyboard foot controller by about twenty percent to a new suggested retail price of about \$40. . . .

Synergistic Software, one of the earliest microcomputer software publishing com-



MINIT MAN (PENGUIN)

panies, is going to leave the marketing end of their business to someone else. The company plans to concentrate on creating new designs which then will be published by other companies. Synergistic will continue servicing all existing customers, providing replacement and back-up disks, and customer service.

Penguin Software's six-month experiment in price paring proved to be a sales bonanza for that company. According to Penguin Presi-

dent Mark Pelczarski, the \$19.95 tag on software prompted so many new sales that the company plans to hold that price line for the indefinite future. . . .



MINIT MAN (PENGUIN)

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Why you're involved.

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real music for your Atari.*



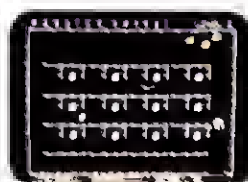
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GLITCH OF THE MONTH

For some reason, I've become fascinated with the various quirks, glitches, and "Easter eggs", which are present in so many of the existing videogame cartridges. I want to thank the readers of *EG* for sharing their odd findings, and the editors who see to it that these findings make the magazine's pages. I truly hope that the excellent effort on the parts of both readers and editors will continue. As for myself, I will certainly be keeping in touch!

Tommy Lupo
Address unknown

Ed: Thanks for the words of encouragement, Tommy — and thanks to all our readers who keep those glitches coming! As an extra incentive to quirk-hunters everywhere, *EG* is kicking off the Glitch-of-the-Month contest, as of this issue. The winning comment earns the player a delightful Pac-Man wall clock donated by the manufacturer, Paxxon Corporation of



PAC-MAN CLOCK (PAXXON)

Miami, Fla. Clearly, this company loves *EG's* readers almost as much as we editors do! And, Tommy, for your kind and thought-provoking comments, you just won yourself a free subscription to *EG*. Only problem is, where do we send it? Mail your address to *EG*, in care of Tracie Forman.



SMURF: RESCUE IN GARGAMEL'S CASTLE (COLECO)

AND THE WINNER IS...

I found a trick on ColecoVision's *Smurf: Rescue in Gargamel's Castle*. When you're at the scenario where you see Smurfette, stop, then go back to the board you just left. But look closely at Smurfette, just as you leave the screen. What happens is that, as you leave, her eyes close and her dress falls off! No kidding!

Jeff Schimelman
Address unknown

Ed: Jeff, you just won yourself this month's Paxxon Pac-Man wall clock. But we don't know where to send it to. Send your address to *EG*, in care of Tracie Forman, and she and Paxxon Corporation will get your clock to you pronto.

Glitch lovers who want to be eligible for the Paxxon timepiece be

advised: Future contest entries must be accompanied by your address, written on the same page as the glitch itself. Entries without a mailing address will be disqualified.

THE INTELLIVISION CHALLENGE

I'm an avid Intellivision gamer. I particularly enjoy playing their excellent sports simulations. There's just one problem: I'm too good! I've creamed everyone I've played against, and am desperately searching for worthy opponents. If anyone out there feels they might pose a decent challenge, please write to me: Jeff Cavalieri, 123 Luisser Street, Clifton New Jersey, 07012.

"Cocky" Cavalieri
Clifton, NJ



BASKETBALL (MATTEL)

ASTROCADE MAKES GOOD

Dear Mark Catlow:

Regarding your recent letter that appeared in *Electronic Games* magazine, we advised that *ASTROCADE* is currently operating under a Chapter 11 situation which is reorganization of the Company.

Per the enclosed copy of UPS "Return to Shipper - Return Notice", dated December 7, 1982, we did send the ASTROCADE system you won but the shipment was refused.

To-date we have heard nothing from you directly.

We are sending, under separate cover, the ASTROCADE system and Basic programmable cartridge you won.

Unfortunately the contest sponsored by ASTROCADE INC. and the Seattle Mariners was held before our filing under Chapter 11 and is considered as a pre-petition payable; such payables cannot be honored until a ruling in favor is made by the Court. We hope these obligations can be settled as soon as possible.

Listed are two distributors in your area that carry ASTROCADE products. They are:

KAKAR Corporation
3818 Innerlake Avenue N
Seattle, WA 98103
(206) 632-5738

Manar Sales
8300 South Military Road
Seattle, WA 98108
(800) 425-2604 or
(206) 763-8960

Direct sales are also made from this office.

We apologize for any inconvenience or disappointment caused you by delay of the ASTROCADE system and your prize money; however, we think you will be happy with your ASTROCADE Arcade as we feel it is the best on the market.

Hoping to continue to be of service to you in the future, we remain

Very truly yours,
Kathleen Russell
ASTROCADE INC.
Credit Manager

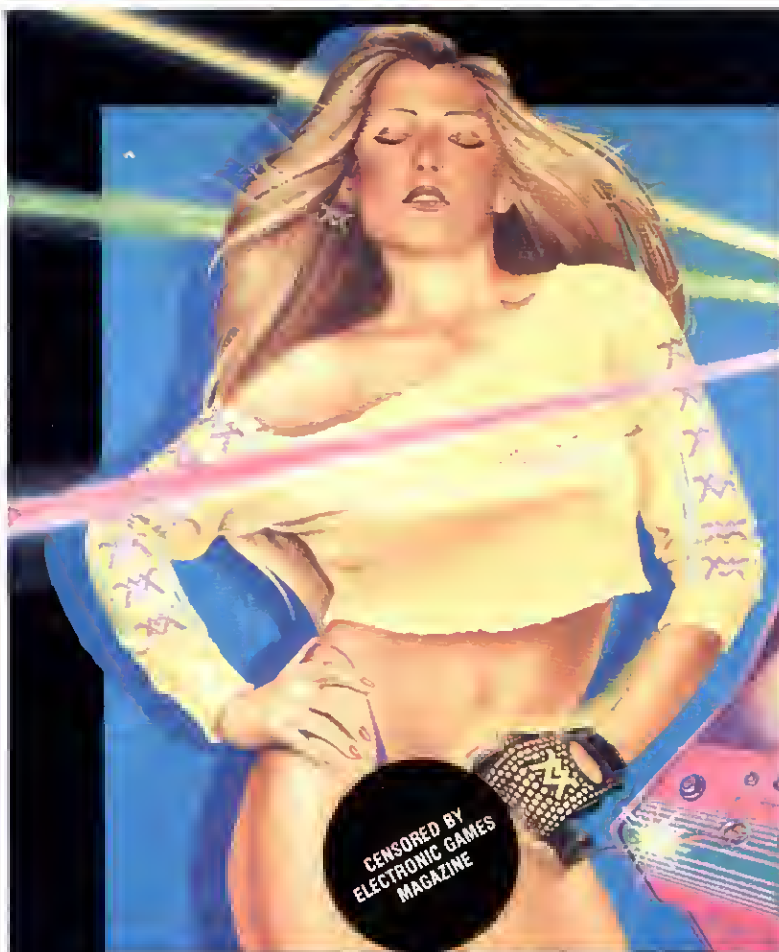
DEFINING THE DIFFERENCE

What's the difference between "Q&A" and "Reader's Replay"?

Aaron Kirtz

Address unknown

Ed: "Q & A" is just what it seems — a question-and-answer column. "Readers Replay" is the space set aside every month to let EG readers comment on editorial policy, particular stories and the magazine in general, and is a forum through which gamers can make themselves heard.



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BUYERS BEWARE

A few months ago I sent a money order to the National Video Exchange in California. It seems they cashed the money order but didn't send my product. Now I can't seem to find their address. Could you help me find it?

Keith Martin

Maugansville, MD

Ed: Keith, you and at least a hundred other readers have asked our help in this matter. It seems the National Videogame Exchange has vanished — along with thousands of our readers' dollars. We're trying to get to the heart of the matter. In the meantime, let the buyer beware!

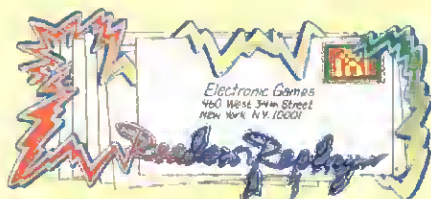
THE HIDDEN KITCHEN

In the November, 1983 issue of your magazine, you offered a "videogame goodie" to the first reader to find Steve Kitchen's name in an early VCS game.

If my memory is correct, the game is **Carnival**. When the game is rolled over, S. KITCHEN appears where the score usually is.

Michael Calvello
Yonkers, NY

Ed: Congratulations, Michael — your correct answer was the first we received. By the time you read this, you should have received a Fire Command II joystick, courtesy of GIM Electronics



and Electronic Games.

And speaking of the Fire Command II, the office has been deluged with letters from people wanting help in locating the arcade-style lap console. If you can't find it locally, drop a line to Mark Douenias at GIM Electronics, 164 Glen Cove Road, Carle Place, NY 11514. He'll be happy to help.

NONEXISTENT GAMES?

I have owned the ColecoVision system since it first came out, and have been a loyal fan until the abrupt halt in new releases began. The best way to frustrate and turn consumer loyalty is to bait the public with promotional propaganda and then do nothing. I hope a few of the million or so current ColecoVision owners are as miffed about the lack of new cartridges and urge fellow owners to make Coleco Industries aware of it!

Jeff Marx
Wantagh, NY

About a month ago I purchased the Atari 5200 because of all the great

games that were "due out". Atari, your days in my home are numbered if you don't start cranking out cartridges!

Bill Ajello
Newark, NJ



B.C.'S QUEST FOR TIRES (SIERRA ON-LINE)
FOR THE COLECOVISION

Ed: Both of you can take some solace in the host of games now available from third-party software manufacturers. To name just a few companies putting out ColecoVision and 5200 cartridges: Parker Brothers, Activision, First Star, and Probe 2000. With all the great games designed by these and other companies, the wait's bound to be a little easier.

THE LITERATE GAMER

I'm 16 years old and attend Queen's Royal College. I am in Form 4. This might not bear any relevance to the



subject of electronic gaming, but I think it does.

In school, when a student reaches Form 4, he/she has to choose eight out of 15 subjects. I chose seven of them with ease, but had difficulty choosing the eighth. Since I was not qualified for the other seven, English Literature was forced upon me. I especially did not like it because of the fact that I hated reading. A few weeks later, my father brought home an **Electronic Games** magazine (Volume 1, number 2). Since I liked arcade games and we already had a VCS, I looked through it. A few hours later I picked it up again.

I looked up some things in "Reader's Replay". I read everything right down to the continuation on page 61. I then went on to the "Test Lab" feature (where I learned some interesting computer terms). I read about the Atari 400. I didn't realize that I was actually reading! Then I read "Arcade America", "Q & A", and every other article. I think the article I liked best was "Great Moments in Videogame History".

I tried to convince my dad to get a subscription. After some time our subscription began in November, 1982. Because of the ads and recommendations in the issues, we now own an Intellivision, a VIC-20, and soon we'll have the ColecoVision.

Listen, because of you guys, I've learned to read a lot more and understand a lot more. Because of reading I draw comics at school, and write small programs for the ZX-81 and VIC-20.

This is one reader who will almost die if anything serious came about that would cause the magazine's publication to stop.

This is for the guys, gals, and games that make it possible, who do the magic, who update us, who advertise for us. Keep up the fantastic (good???) work! And, hey — I *still* don't like English literature!

Dion Jennings
Trinidad, West Indies

Ed: Your letter is going right on the editor's wall, Dion, so the next time anybody asks us "Why do you do it?" an eloquent reply will be right on hand. You really made our day.

PIRATING OR PROTECTING?

In your November 1983 issue, you had a letter inquiring about copying Starpath cassette games to another cassette. Why is it you assumed the person was out to pirate the game?

When software manufacturers

place their games on low-quality tapes, the consumer should not have to risk \$30-\$50 on a game, only to have it damaged by a tape drive.

I'm all in favor of protecting the rights of the program designers from copying, but the consumer also has the right to protect his or her investment. When one takes up the issue of copying, it's a double-edged sword that one should wield carefully. Don't always assume the worst of people.

Kenneth F. Jeras
Phoenix, AZ

Ed: We agree that consumers have the

right to expect their software products to work consistently. That's what the warranty card in each game package is for. People who have filled out and returned the warranty card generally have no problem in replacing defective cartridges, tapes, or disks.

Sorry, Kenneth, but we stand by our guns. Few people can resist the temptation to copy off a few extra tapes or disks for friends (not for profit). Unfortunately, the end result of any piracy is still the same — the software manufacturer (and therefore the consumer) loses.

Ⓞ

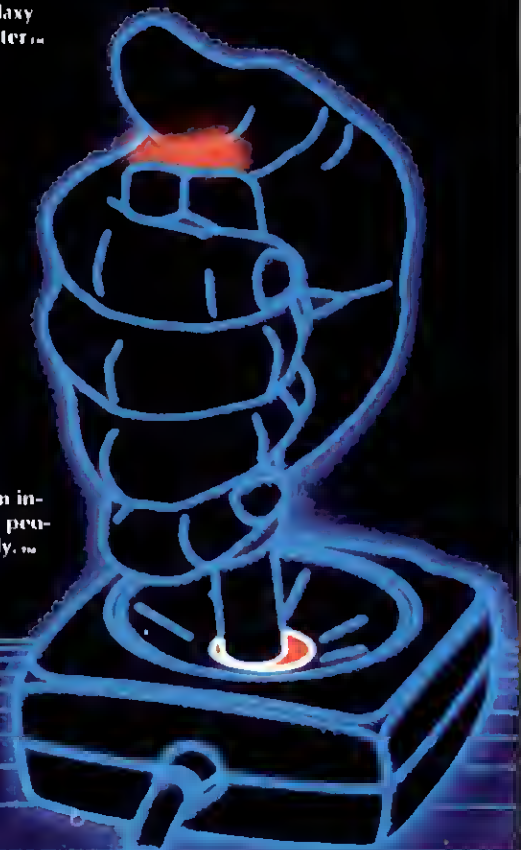
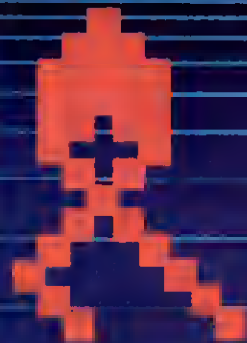
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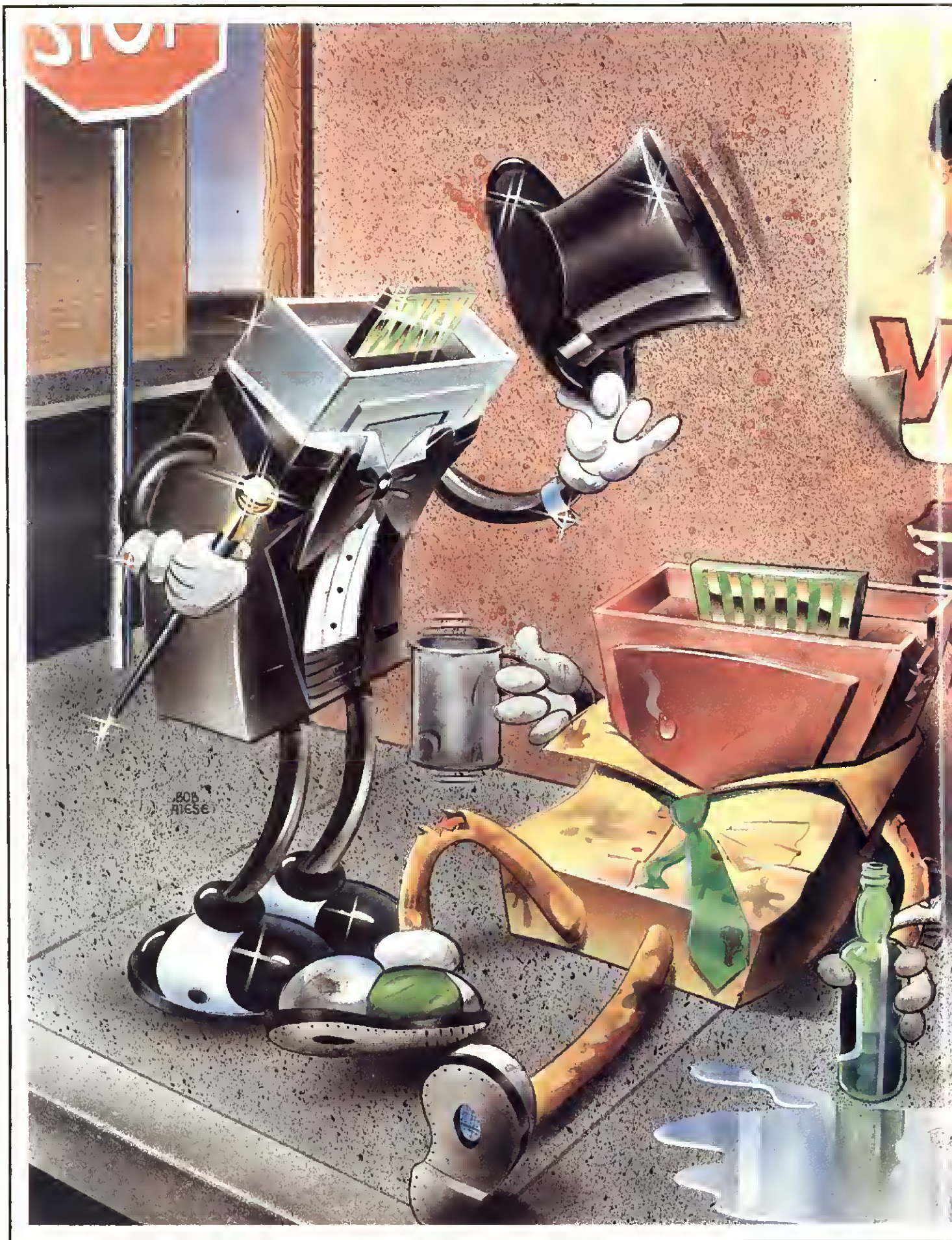
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Can Electronic Gaming Survive

THE BIG SHAKE-OUT?

Some Game-makers Thrive; Others Are Barely Alive

By DAVID LUSTIG

It's no secret: Something's rotten in the state of electronic gaming. The barely five-year-old industry, which seemed destined to ride an unstoppable sales tidal wave a year ago, is now worried about crashing on the jagged rocks of the Chapter 11 section of the bankruptcy act. Reading the stories about mass layoffs, belt-tightening and production cutbacks, you might get the idea that the whole hobby might soon become little more than a footnote in the history books — or possibly the topic of a doctoral thesis titled "The Rise and Fall of Electronic Gaming."

Sound far-fetched? Well, some of the news is mighty bad. Even a modern-day Moses would have trouble parting the sea of red ink that has engulfed some game industry giants. Mattel's electronic's division lost \$195 million, Atari sprung a \$500 million leak in 1983 and even usually high-flying Activision flamed out and suffered a loss of \$3 million.

And those, fellow arcaders, are some of the survivors. Not all the videogame manufacturers have done as well. Small fry like Data Age, U.S. Games and Games by Apollo wilted under the heat of competition and are now history. Even the computer software segment is not without its casualties, such as Programma International and Crystalware.

To paraphrase one of James Cagney's more famous dying lines, "Is *this* the end of electronic gaming?"

That's certainly the picture doom-and-gloomers, especially those in the

computers and videogames as the coming growth industry at a time when the U.S. seemed to have few others. The hardware and software manufacturers were the hope of tomorrow.

In truth, the climate was much like the period just before the stock market crash of 1929. Everyone was having such a good time. Every company with a product just *knew* multi-million dollar sales were waiting around the next corner. The money flowed, the stock touts hyped and the fun never stopped. And this rosy picture was so far off the board that almost nobody spotted — or wanted to spot — that even heaven-on-Earth has a stop sign.

At the height of the insanity, each month brought at least 50 new videogame cartridges rolling off the nation's assemblylines, despite the fact that research conducted by a variety of manufacturers indicated that a "heavy" videogamer buys an average of six titles a year — a cartridge every two months. (The typical **EG** reader, incidentally, buys about twice as many games.) The worst part was that for every good game — one with good sound, graphics, theme and play-action — publishers pushed a couple of dozen dogs on the public.

"There are many companies, particularly in the videogame field," explains **Electronic Games** editor Arnie



THE PINK PANTHER (PROBE 2000)

mass media and the Wall Street brokerages, seem intent on painting. Are they right? Fortunately, the truth, stripped of confusing claims and counterclaims, looks much more favorable for our hobby.

As recently as a year ago, it was impossible to read a dark story about electronic gaming. Pundits touted



RACQUETBALL (APOLLO)

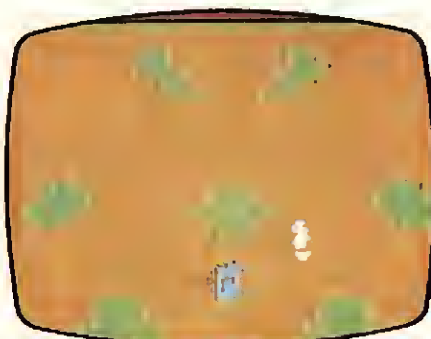
Katz, "that entered the business without the basis to survive. Some companies, for one reason or another, expected to make it quick, had one product that had to go over big to make the financing back. Just as in any other field, the strong companies, the well-managed ones, survive, and the badly managed ones, go to the wall. Whether it's videogame cartridges or tv dinners, you have to serve the market."

A case in point, some analysts say, is Data Age. The product, when it finally reached consumers, was not state-of-the-art. Two years previous, yes, but not when introduced. The Data Age cartridges, with their clumsy graphics, soon got lost in the shuffle.

The typical electronic game store's shop space is at a premium. It's the hot current games, not last year's ideas, that rate the room and pay the bills.

Data Age, by far, is not alone. Another example is Games by Apollo. Its *Racquet Ball*, according to a number of veteran game players, was just plain unplayable. Once a firm establishes a track record of producing less-than-desirable software, it becomes much harder to sell the newer releases, even if they don't suffer from the same foibles as their predecessors.

The catchword that everyone is latching onto is "shakeout." This is when some companies fall by the wayside and leave a survivable economic path for the remainder. With typi-



RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK (ATARI)

THE BIG SHAKE-OUT

cal 20/20 hindsight, everyone now "knew" it was going to happen. When it began, analysts gamely predicted "the shakeout is starting." But the shakeout may be supplanted by the "wait-out." The outfit that can hold out the longest, hoping the other weak sisters will throw in their cards may be the surest long-term bet.

Calling the problem a game may seem unfair but, in reality, it is a game — albeit a very serious one. Manufacturers and consumers are caught in the middle.

The plethora of news reports, financial guides and stock tips indicates that the industry, even in its stumbling in-

Companies May Fall To the Wayside, But Gaming Goes On.

fancy, obviously had problems. These weren't particularly unsolvable problems, but problems nonetheless. A very few voices, including the top editors of *Electronic Games*, stated from the beginning that there were a few thorns on the rose. If the words of caution were heard, they were not necessarily acted upon.

Now we have come full circle. Just as the massive amount of super-positive articles of last year were one-sided, so are the equally massive amount of "in-depth" articles pointing out all of the industry's bad points. Reporters and analysts are seeing a city block on fire and declaring the entire town a loss.

One of the first realizations that must be made is that the industry is changing, and changing very rapidly. Like it or not, the home videogame era is ending and a new era, the computer



EGGOMANIA (U.S. GAMES)

game era, is dawning. Atari 2600s are great, but home computers that can file Mom's recipes and keep track of Dad's checks as well as play games are the ever-increasing wave of the future.

Computer games consistently offer sophistication and increased graphics over their strictly game-playing cousins. Companies slow on the uptake to keep up with the changing trends are getting aced out of the market.

That last word, market, is a key factor to much of the industry's woes.

Two Christmases ago, Atari's games were in the doldrums. The company found out that hot-sounding titles, such as *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *E.T.* do not necessarily make hot games because they bear the names of popular movies, especially when they only approximately follow the basic theme of their namesakes.

Another company that hoped licensing a game would make the magic rub off from the movie is Parker Brothers. *Jedi Arena*, keyed to the original "Star Wars" movie, centers around Luke Skywalker learning the mysteries of "the Force." However, professional gamer critics claim it isn't much fun. Parker Brothers has apparently realized that also, and the firm is quietly allowing *Arena* to fall by the wayside.

An industry insider claims that Parker Brothers, having learned the lesson



JOURNEY'S ESCAPE (DATA AGE)

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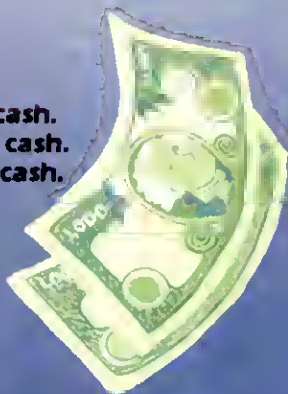


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1. Employees of Championship Electronics and their families are not eligible to enter.
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*Minors must be accompanied by one parent, expenses complements of Championship Electronics.

of quality over quantity, has killed a number of games, even those in advanced stages of development, and is concentrating on bringing out only the cream of the crop. This strong marketing strategy, say analysts, makes Parker Brothers one of the "haves," rather than the "have-nots" of the shakeout.

The best strategy, which a number of the more successful companies are adopting, seems to be to marshal the available resources, market a few good games with extensive advertising and push with strong merchandising techniques.

Which brings us to delivery, that last but most important part of the product distribution chain. The greatest game, the most sophisticated hardware, the hottest accessory dies if the manufacturer can't get it to the consumers in sufficient quantity. Coleco has been caught up in the delivery problem, with many hardware and software items still not on dealer

THE BIG SHAKE-OUT

Yet some equipment is getting a bad rap from the press because of unfair comparisons. Prime example is Coleco's Adam home computer. Even before it appeared, some critics were bouncing all over it, as though it were a problem child because it can't keep up with the likes of an Apple or the business computer systems. The

that Intellivision is a system that has been passed by. Despite the fact that the games are quite good, games for the Atari 5200 and ColecoVision are considered better.

"It's simple," explains one stock market analyst wryly. "Videogames were mass-produced with the same conceptualization as automobiles or cameras: 'Produce a plethora and watch a hungry market eat them up.' The problem is they are not automobiles — which have to be periodically replaced — and they are not cameras — which almost everybody can quickly understand and use. They are computers, a commodity that takes a knack to understand by a sophisticated market that wants the classy, first-rate merchandise now, not next week, or 'coming soon.'"

Is there more than just a ray of hope in the cloudy skies of home videogames?

"Absolutely," say the millions of



FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER (DATA AGE)



GOPHER (U.S. GAMES)



LOST LUGGAGE (APOLLO)



POWER LORDS (PROBE 2000)

shelves three months after initial advertising. One of the worst offenders is Mattel. One EG editor has been promised a peek at Mattel's new add-on keyboard at least 15 times in the past three years. He's still waiting.

Another example is Odyssey and its Probe 2000 line of software for Atari 2600 and ColecoVision. Four games, **Trail of the Pink Panther**, **Power Lords**, **Lord of the Dungeon** and **War Room**, were promised for late '83, yet only *War Room* made it to consumers. The lack of an adequate supply of computer chips was blamed for the delay.


Substandard hardware and software — and there is a lot of it in the electronic gaming market — won't be tolerated by consumers, who are too slick to give all allegiance to bad joysticks, blotchy graphics and dumb play concepts. As one industry maven asserts, "You can always sell a good game."

answer is too obvious; you can't compare apples and Adams, even if Adam took a byte out of the you-know-what. Can a bicycle keep pace with an automobile? Can they be compared? Of course not. Yet that is exactly what is happening with the Adam. Problems? Probably. A dandy little home computer that will last a long time not only in the marketplace but in the home? Very probably.

Another trap into which a number of companies have fallen is staying with the videogame software segment too long instead of converting production to computer games. At a major industry show in January 1983, Imagic displayed nearly a dozen Intellivision games, yet many industry insiders feel

owners of home videogame machines and gaming computers. "Absolutely," say the increasing millions of owners of Apples and Adams and Commodores and anything else that can work all day and play all night. And that "absolutely" indicates the continued buying of game cartridges by the millions.

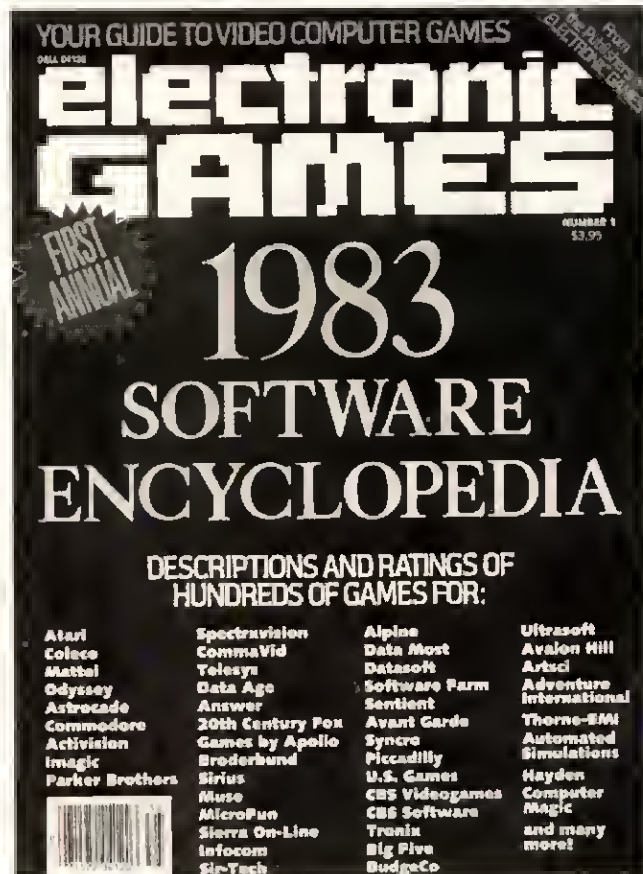
Some, perhaps many, videogame and computer game companies will not survive the shakeout. But it is vital to distinguish between the health of a single manufacturer, and the well-being of an entire hobby and the industry which serves it. And the well-run companies, the ones with socko R&D and good marketing, will ride out the current confusion in reasonably healthy shape, because electronic gaming is here to stay as a major leisure time activity.

After all, a consumer-oriented industry that caters to millions of Americans can't disappear overnight. 

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COLECOVISION



It's One Year Later and The Opera's Not Over Till the Fat Lady Sings!

The Atari 5200-ColecoVision competition reads like it was written by the author who wrote the fable about the big race between the tortoise and the hare. As you'll recall, the bunny hopped to a commanding early lead only to be caught in the stretch by the slow-but-steady turtle.

Coleco president Arnold Greenberg must feel a little like that rabbit as the

5200 closes the once-enormous sales gap. The latest figures available at presstime show the 5200's sales volume running as high as 90% of the ColecoVision's total unit movement. By comparison, consumers bought nearly twice as many ColecoVisions as 5200s during the fourth quarter of 1982.

When these third wave pro-

grammables made their debut a year ago, the deck seemed stacked in favor of the ColecoVision. But nothing in electronic gaming stands still for long. Now that both machines have established themselves in the marketplace and managed to get third-party publishing support, it's time to re-examine them to see how they stand today.

THE CONSOLES

The 5200's sleek cabinet still gets the nod for styling by a small margin, but the real story is inside the casing. Both machines are powerful, capable of producing games virtually on a par with current computer software.

Neither company has precisely defined the memory power contained in its third wave system. Every corporate spokesman quotes a different figure for usable memory. Evidence indicates that the 5200 may enjoy a 16K memory superiority, but the manufacturers' prevailing ROM cartridge policies render this academic. (5200 carts are usually 16K, while those for the ColecoVision are mostly 24K and 32K.)

SOUND AND GRAPHICS

The systems make substantially the same claim: They promise a sight and sound experience that was previously only available at family amusement centers. Neither truly equals the best coin-op visuals, but they do leave all previous programmable systems in the dust.

The first group of ColecoVision car-



COLECOVISION WITH ACCESSORIES

S ATARI 5200

Most controllers break eventually, but the standard 5200 command device may be too fragile. Those who guide the stick with a heavy hand may run up a good-sized bill for replacements.

Coleco's decision to stick with the standard nine-pin plug makes it much easier to find replacement controllers, since the machine can accommodate devices created for use with the Atari 2600, Atari computers, VIC-20 and Commodore 64. This makes ColecoVision games that don't need two separate action buttons much easier to play. In addition, Amiga, D-Zyne and Gim Electronics all market controllers for the ColecoVision.

The Newport 5200 joystick adapter



5200 TRAKBALL

can banish those super-system controller blues. Several outfits make Y-plugs that let a gamer connect a 2600 stick to the 5200 and still retain access to the keypad.

Coleco offers three special control-

tridges looked better than the initial 5200 batch. Atari designers have shown improved graphics programming since then, and titles like **Baseball** and **Kangaroo** are making gamers look twice. Meanwhile, some Coleco-produced carts are based on games, like **Time Pilot** and **Omega Race**, which didn't look that great as pay-for-play machines.

Getting ColecoVision-compatible cartridges to look just right has caused problems for some independent game-makers. Even MicroFun's otherwise outstanding **Miner 2049er** has on-screen characters that look a little squatty.

Some gamers have complained about the high level of RF interference found on both systems. Fortunately, early production models exhibited this problem to a greater degree than current ones do.

ColecoVision's overall sound quality is better than that of the 5200, though Atari's slight revamp of the system greatly reduced this advantage. Some 5200 cartridges include good-quality voice synthesis — **Berzerk** and **Baseball** excel — without the need for extra attachments.

CONTROLLERS

The standard ColecoVision controllers are nothing special, but the pair Atari included with the original 5200 was even worse. The recently revamped 5200 sticks are an improvement, but the knob-top ColecoVision stick is still the lesser of two evils.

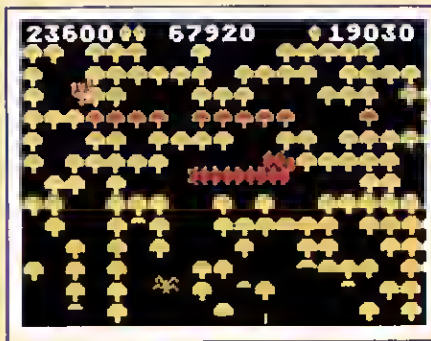


ATARI 5200

COLECOVISION VS ATARI 5200



TURBO (COLECO)



CENTIPEDE (ATARI)



TUNNELS & TROLLS (COLECO)

lers. The steering wheel module, which comes with **Turbo**, makes driving games even more fun. The roller controller, intended for games like **Silther**, gets a good rating from players, but opinion is sharply divided on the Super-Action controller. Criticism has focused on the array of four color-coded action buttons in the trigger. Not everyone has sufficiently muscular pinkies.

Atari's 5200 trackball is quite good. **Missile Command** and **Centipede**, which used trackballs in their coin-op incarnations, are particular beneficiaries.

ACCESSORIES

Coleco broke new ground by introducing a 2600 emulator that allows the ColecoVision to run cartridges designed for the 4K Atari VCS. More recently, Atari has marketed a similar add-on that lets 5200 owners enjoy those 2600 carts, too.

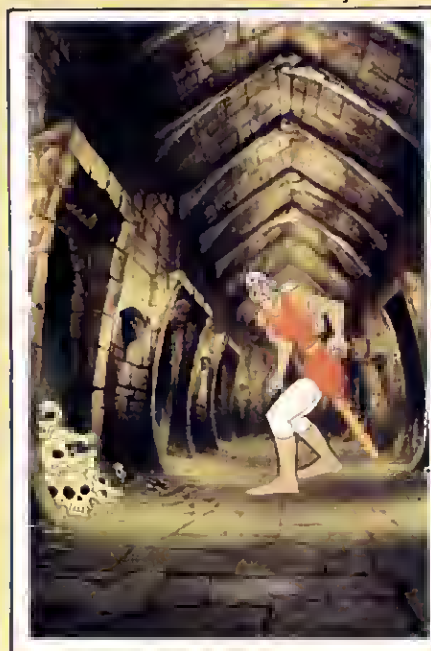
Both have drawbacks. Coleco's 2600 emulator won't play all the cartridges that the actual 2600 can handle. The problem lies with the software programming by some third-party publishers, but that explanation won't make a home arcader any happier when a just-purchased game won't come up on the screen.

The 2600 emulator for the 5200 reportedly won't play every cartridge, either, though there may not be quite as many that won't work. On the other hand, the attachment lacks a "color/black and white" switch. Some cartridges, like **Starmaster** (Activision), assign different functions to the switch, and for titles in that category,

the player is simply out of luck. Another hassle: The emulator won't fit the first edition of the 5200 without a service center stop.

In a sense, the most important ColecoVision accessory is the Adam computer. The company sells an upgrade kit that transforms the third wave programmable into a personal computer. If the Adam is half as popular as Coleco executives anticipate, owners of the ColecoVision will reap the rewards in the form of stepped-up software activity.

ColecoVision owners also figure to be the first to have a chance to play videodisc games in the home. The company has already licensed **Dragon's Lair** and intends to unveil a disc-playing module for the ColecoVision before the end of this year. Its



DRAGON'S LAIR (CINEMATRONICS)

value will ultimately depend on how many discs Coleco can get into the stores quickly. No one wants a hardware device without software.

DELIVERING ON SCHEDULE

It's pretty obvious that developing high-quality hardware and software is only half the battle. The other half is getting all those goodies into the stores where people can buy them. Atari and Coleco are far from being the most flagrant shredders of delivery schedules, but neither has a spotless record.

Coleco made an excellent start, rolling out a strong group of cartridges, the 2600 emulator and the driving module. The manufacturer seemed to lose its way for a while last spring and summer, when no new cartridge appeared. The pace of introductions has quickened since then, but much-ballyhooed titles like **Frontline** and **Tunnels & Trolls** still aren't available as of this writing.

Atari scheduled few new cartridges during the first six months of 1983 while it evaluated the 5200's sales record. The Sunnyvale, CA., company has switched into high gear since then, however, and the system's software library is now satisfyingly large.

Atari didn't keep its promise, made in ads aired during the winter of 1982-83, that it would have the 2600 emulator out immediately. Coleco distributed its 2600 emulator right on time, but the roller controller turned out to be months late. Generally speaking, though, both manufactur-

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COLECOVISION VS ATARI 5200

ers have done a decent job of coping with production.

SOFTWARE

Coleco couldn't do anything wrong during the period in which it published hits like *Venture*, *Zaxxon*, *Donkey Kong* and *Lady Bug*. When the cartridge drought ended, however, the company didn't maintain its momentum, releasing ho-hummers like *Space Panic* and *Space Fury*. Here's where Coleco's emphasis on producing home versions of coin-ops may be hurting. Most of the really good games are spoken for, and the number of "sleepers" — titles that blossom into hits once they reach the home front — is not inexhaustible.

The first batch of 5200 carts drew on Atari's computer game catalog very heavily. There's nothing wrong with titles like *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*, but everyone had seen them before, and they didn't spark a lot of excitement.

Once the system passed through its introductory period, Atari began developing a great number of 5200 cartridges. Their appearance in retail stores caused a great upswing of interest in this programmable video-game system. The 5200 library is now liberally salted with glittering new gems like *Countermeasure*, *Qix* and *Tennis*. Atari also has first call on games marketed by its coin-op arm, which has brought arcade hits like *Pole Position* and *Centipede* home.

Each system has attracted third-party software support. Right now,



MR. DO! (COLECO)



WIZARD OF WOR (COLECO)



DIG DUG (ATARI)



JOUST (ATARI)

games produced for the ColecoVision — including *War Room* (Probe 2000), *Miner 2049er* (MicroFun), *Nova Blast* (Imagic) and *Q*bert* (Parker Brothers) — out-do titles for the 5200, which include *Mountain King* (CBS) and *Miner 2049er* (Big Five).

Should the systems actually reach sales parity, it is logical to assume that third party publishers will offer an equal quantity and quality of games for each. On the other hand, the existence of the Adam computer is a spur for independent software publishing, since it gives hope that the system will remain "live" long enough for manufacturers to get a good dollar return on the goods they distribute. No company wants to get caught making cartridges for a system that's in the process of slipping off the gaming map.

started about nine miles behind the ColecoVision, but canny product selection and marketing has greatly reduced ColecoVision's dominance of the third wave programmable category.

But it would be wrong to write off the ColecoVision. The manufacturer has shown renewed publishing vigor in recent months, and third-party support has started to fill holes in the catalog of ColecoVision-compatible programs. And the ability to upgrade the system into a full-fledged computer is no small advantage.

Which system is the right purchase depends on your taste in electronic games. *EG's* editors recommend giving both machines' software rosters a lot of study — and then picking the unit that has the greatest number of titles which appeal to you.

What has changed dramatically in the last year is that the home arcaders of America now have two viable choices.

Ⓔ

THE BIG SUM-UP

Let's give Atari credit. The 5200



MOUNTAIN KING (CBS)

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COMPUTER GAMING

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SOFTWARE SHOWCASE

FLIP & FLOP

Designed by Jim Nangano
First Star/Atari/32K disk

You can add Flip the Kangaroo and Mitch the Monkey to the growing list of color-changing game celebrities which already includes Achmed (Pharaoh's Pyramid), Mr. Cool and, of course, Q*bert. These escapees from a circus alternate as the star character in one of the most charming yet challenging contests around.

Nangano has axed the now-familiar pyramidal stack of colored cubes in favor of a network of playforms connected by short ladders. Each platform is sectioned into squares. Some are blank, but most contain either a square pattern or pulse color. The kangaroo or monkey must visit each of the patterned squares without getting caught by a pursuer or falling off the construction. The flashing squares are traps which hold whatever lands on them in place for several seconds. If

the player maneuvers the pesky Zookeeper or his net, depending on whether Flip or Mitch is in the spotlight, onto a snare, it gives the gamer's on-screen representative some more breathing room.

The home arcader starts with five "lives" and earns an extra one for completing each level. The computer permits selection of 13 levels prior to the start of play, but novices should stick to the first two until they get the hang of the control scheme.

The disk gets its name from the use of alternating playfields. Odd-numbered ones feature Flip moving around the top of a platform system seen in three-quarter perspective. Each even-numbered field is physically the same as the preceeding odd one, but Mitch the Monkey is shown swinging from box to box on the undersides of the playforms. The change in perspective is dazzling, and the same platform looks strange and

unfamiliar when seen from a fresh viewpoint.

There are no pursuers on the first two levels, but the Zookeeper pops up for the first time on third level and his net chases Mitch starting on fourth. The arrangement of ladders and platforms becomes more extensive as the skill level rises until Flip is hopping around on what looks like a whole city of them.

One or two computerists can play *Flip & Flop*. By pre-setting the controls, two participants can have their own joysticks or share one back and forth.

As in First Star's *Astro Chase* (now published by Parker Brothers), *Flip & Flop* rewards good performance by providing an animated intermission after ever fifth playfield. These cute vignettes involve Flip or Mitch returning to the big top and cavorting with their animal friends.

The control scheme can be frustrating. It's very easy to swing Mitch right out into thin air or hop Flip over the infinite abyss. Get past that hurdle, though, and you've got one super game. *Flip & Flop* strikes a happy medium between splashy audiovisuals and intriguing play-action.

(Arnie Katz)



First Star's *Flip & Flop* makes color changing twice as much fun. That's Flip on the left and Mitch on the Flop side.

"...perhaps the most graphically magnificent computer game yet created!"

Bill Kunkel, Electronic Games Magazine

ASTRO CHASE

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Actual Game Screens



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Software Showcase,
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PREDATOR

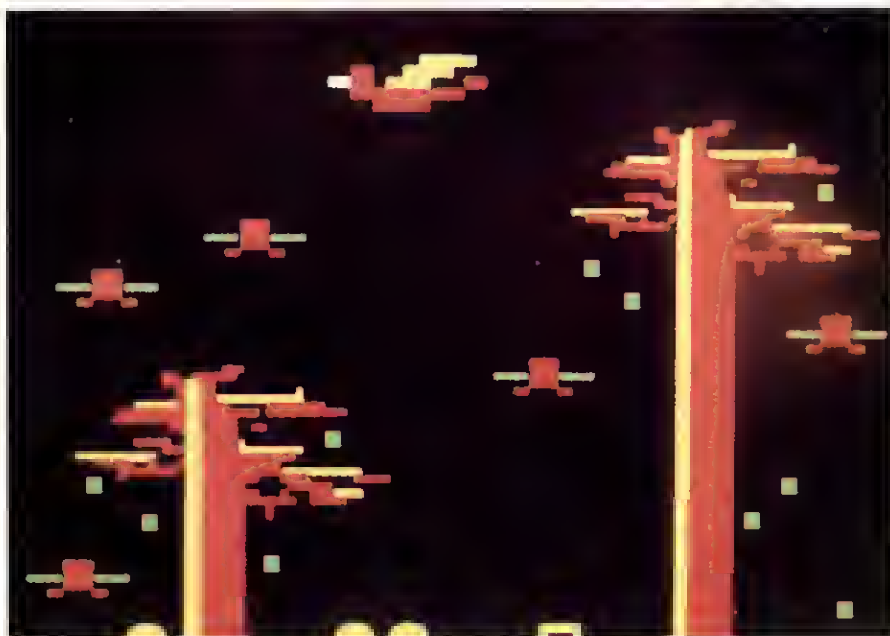
HES/VIC-20/cartridge

In certain aspects, *Predator* resembles an invasion game. A giant egg flies on-screen, falls to the ground between two leaf-covered trees, and is destroyed. In its wake, it leaves behind a random number of smaller eggs. The gamer's character, a bird, must land on the eggs before they hatch. Failing that, the predator must shoot the invading birds down—but the invaders seem to be made of razor-sharp steel, so any contact with them results in feathers flying and one dead predator.

In *Predator*, the player has far more mobility than is allowed in most invasion games. This is because the gamer's bird flies. When it first comes on-screen, the bird starts falling to the ground. If the gamer wishes to remain aloft, he or she has to flap the predator's wings. This is no easy task—especially when one is trying to fly on an angle—because of the trees; but then again, no one ever said flying was easy.

On the lower levels, landing on the eggs and shooting down the invading birds isn't too difficult. The gamer can simply fall to earth and fire away until the screen is cleared. (Points are scored for birds destroyed and eggs landed on. In addition, bonus points are awarded for leaves left on the trees.) After a while, though, the eggs hatch as soon as they touch the ground, so staying aloft is absolutely necessary for survival.

To complicate matters, every so often a worm comes out of the ground and begins crawling across the screen.



They say the early bird gets the worm; in *Predator*, he'd better.



COMPUTER GAMING

Should it slither over an unhatched egg, the hatchling invader flies upside down. These mutant birds are especially dangerous, making a beeline right for the gamer.

Although primarily a one-screen game, *Predator* has 99 levels—enough to satisfy most gamers. The graphics are excellent and the programming allows for either keyboard or joystick play.

Whenever players reach new scoring heights, a little man runs out and lights a Roman candle in the center of the screen. *Predator*, designed by Tom Griner, is one of the better games available for the VIC-20.

(Vincent Puglia)

MOTHERSHIP

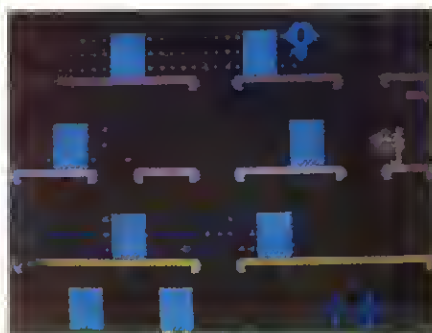
Designed by Al Laity

SoftSync/Commodore 64/35K disk

Three completely different types of gaming action are the main attraction of this science fiction shoot-out by a designer who usually flexes his programming muscles on serious stuff like accounting packages. Although *Mothership* is not quite a classic, Al Laity has produced an intriguing program, with a graphics assist from his wife Robyn, for a system that won't have full third-party support until the end of this year.

The first phase of this solitaire game is based on the familiar climactic scene in "Star Wars" in which the fighters of the Rebel Alliance zoom down the

trench of the Deathstar. The opposition is provided by a succession of alien ships, which swoop down to the trench and fire missiles at the player's craft. The missile is always directed at the player's ship's position at the time the alien spacecraft fires, so it is necessary to keep it in constant motion with a facile hand on the joystick.



Level 2 of *Mothership* (above) is a climbing game; Level 3 is a shoot-out.



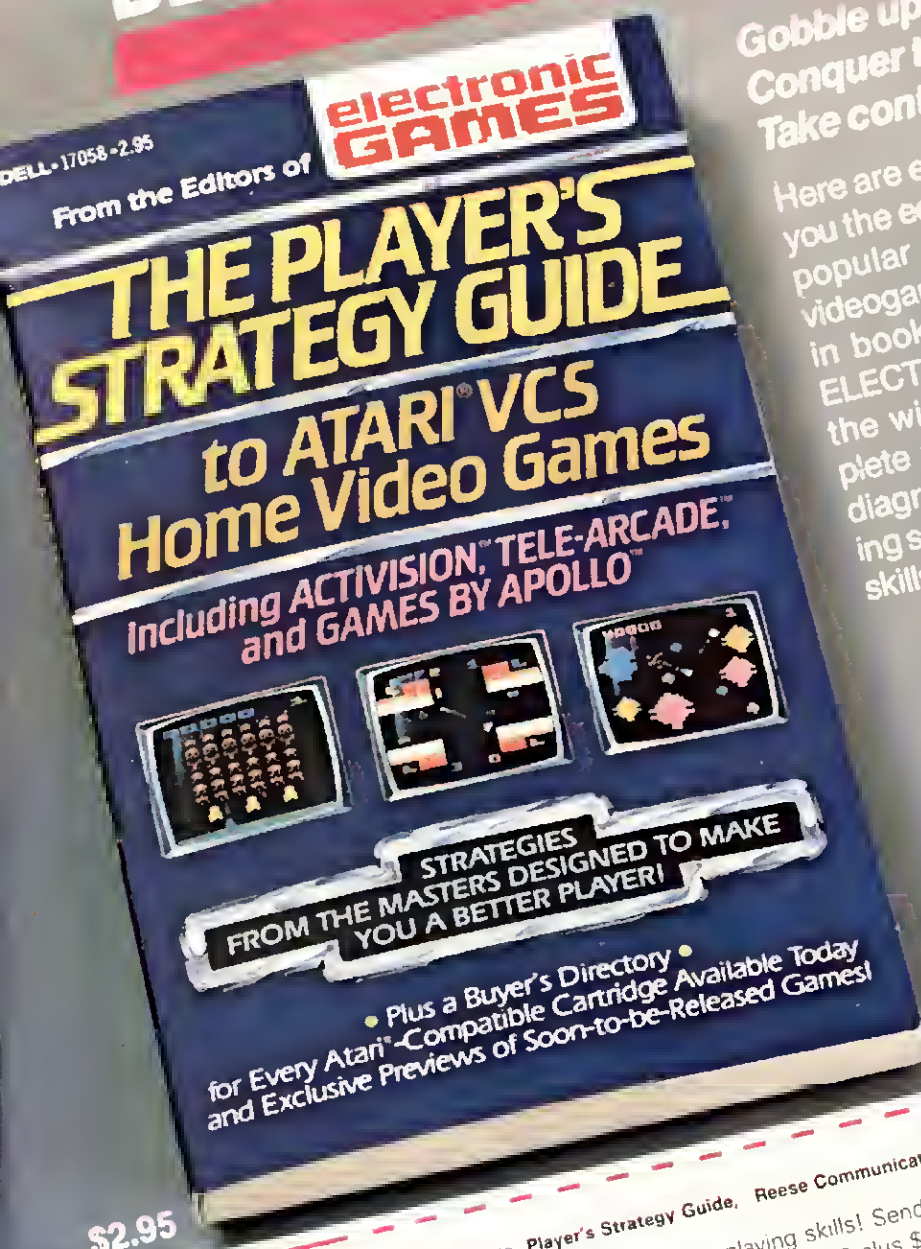
Constant fire is not possible, so don't count on getting more than two chances to destroy each rival spaceship as it swoops down the trench. In fact, the tendency to fire too soon is the biggest mistake new players must overcome to have a chance of hitting 12 enemy ships without losing one of the three in the computerist's squadron. It's often best to let the attacking fighter take its best shot, avoid it and then line up for a close-range knock-out blow.

The second phase is a climbing and shooting contest. The player must shoot aliens while using the elevators to reach the control pod located on the top horizontal level of the playfield. It wouldn't make a complete game all by itself, but it functions nicely as merely one phase out of three.

An outer space shoot-'em-up is the third scenario. The player must dismantle the enemy planet's pod defenses, avoiding torpedo fire while eliminating each pod with four hits. Again, this segment of the game couldn't stand by itself, but it functions well in terms of the overall game.

Softsync's previous games were de-

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As seen above, the first level of Soft-Sync's *Mothership* is reminiscent of the trench scene in Lucas' *Star Wars* movie.

signed for the Timex TS 1000, and it's not entirely clear that the publisher has fully adjusted to the highest standards Commodore arcaders set for software for their systems. *Mothership* is generally well-done, employing some subtle visual tricks to heighten the illusion of three-dimensionality in the first scenario, but there are annoying little flaws. There's no indication of how many of the original three ships the player has remaining, and the instruction screens use ordinary type where a special logo would be expected.

Like a surprising number of C64 software, *Mothership* is a little too hard for the average home gamer. It's not going to make participants bite their nails in frustration, but players should be prepared for a quick exit until they have a chance to concoct an effective strategy.

Overall, however, *Mothership* is a good title. Once Softsync acquires a bit more experience with producing products for this computer system, the company could become an important source of gaming software.

(Steve Davidson)

LIFESPAN

Roklan/Atari/cartridge

Anyone who still thinks electronic gaming is a mindless hobby should sit down to a few games of *Lifespan*. This multi-scenario action game is an analogy of a person's life experiences, from the cradle to the grave, with the ultimate objective of leading the longest, fullest life possible.

Each game begins with the birth spiral screen, wherein the player is treated to a pretty light sequence. While waiting for the fetus to "develop", the gamer can move the joystick in any direction to add musical tones to the birth chorus.

Gradually, the birth spiral fades away, and the player becomes an in-



COMPUTER GAMING

fant in a playpen. The object of this screen is to isolate as many personality traits as possible (there are four altogether) to become as well-rounded a person as possible. To do this, gamers move building blocks around the screen with their cursor, dropping the blocks near the corners of the playpen, thus keeping the free-bouncing personality traits from escaping. The more traits trapped, the sooner opportunities come knocking later, and the longer the player's lifespan.

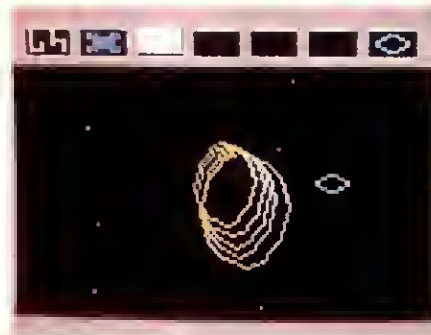
The third screen brings the gamer's character to the threshold of adulthood—the opportunity gates. The gates are actually a dark, forbidding corridor filled with tiny points of light.



Gamers get to live through a complete life cycle in John O'Neill's *Lifespan*. After the birth spiral (left), they meet up with opportunities (right).

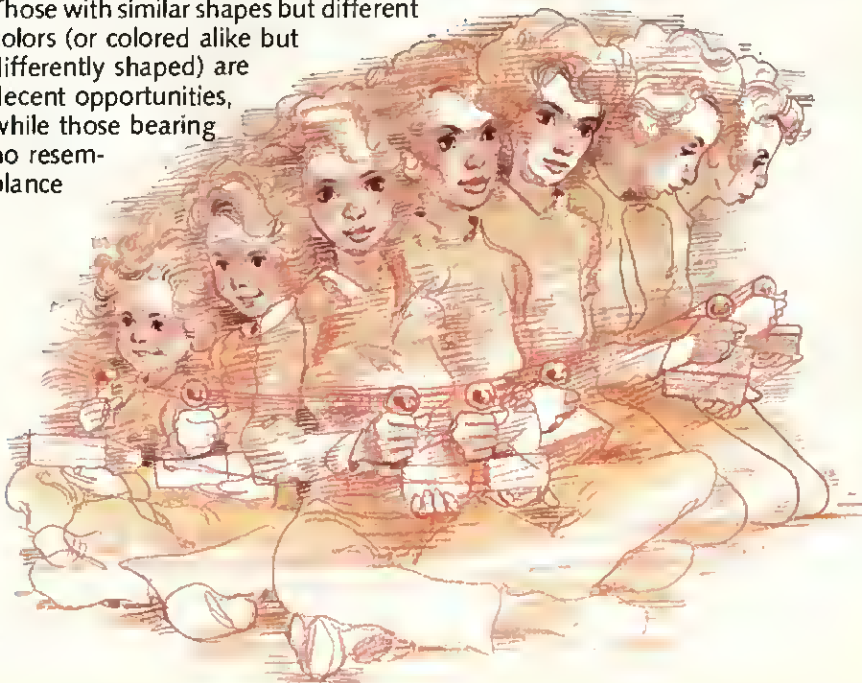
are the worst choices. The object of the screen is to locate the right opportunity, then enter it by passing through the center of its spiral.

Successfully entering an opportunity leads to the next scenario, situations and conversations. (Unsuccessful tries have a negative effect on the gamer's health.) This screen is an analogy to the social process, in which players must make contact with common interests (depicted as colored squares on the grid) in order to enter conversations with their peers. This must be done while avoiding creatures that rob the gamer of common interests. When enough common interests have been acquired and the player successfully joins a conversation, it's time for the most dangerous screen of all—the experience corridor.



Depending on the character traits trapped in early childhood, perfect and not-so-perfect opportunities whiz by on the screen. The best opportunities are those that look exactly like the player's character trait. Those with similar shapes but different colors (or colored alike but differently shaped) are decent opportunities, while those bearing no resemblance

Hurling through the corridor at lightning speed, the player has to steer clear of the dark Worries, Fears, and Doubts that threaten the health of the character. Large, bright lights are Hopes, which can reverse some of the



Jump on 10 monsters, 64 screens and \$10,000 with Pogo Joe.™

A Mutated Wonderwhisk whisks by. The Spinning Top almost topples him!



Close. But Pogo Joe bounces back. Bouncing from cylinder to cylinder, screen to screen, Pogo Joe racks up point after point.

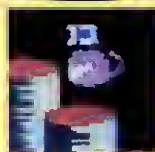
You guide him from cylinder to cylinder, changing the color on top of each. Change the top of each cylinder on a screen, then you're on to the next.

The more screens you complete, the nastier the monsters you face, and the faster they attack.

Press the fire button! Jump two cylinders to safety. Hop into a transport tube, and then whoosh! Pogo Joe appears across the screen. Jump on an escaping monster. Blam! It's gone in a flash! Only to reappear out of thin air.



Keep bouncing Joe to original music on realistic 3-dimensional cylinders. All the characters in this rollicking game are



also 3-dimensional and fully animated. The graphics almost jump off the screen, leaving the arcades behind.



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Pogo Joe in 48-64K on the Atari and Commodore 64. See your local software dealer.

debilitating effects of failure. If the player is strong enough to cope with life experiences, he or she is rewarded with an extra character dimension and a beautifully-animated Insight before returning to the earlier screens to continue play.

The real payoff comes at the end, in the form of a brilliant sound and light show, the electronic version of one's life flashing before his eyes. The better the player, the more spectacular the finale.

It's impossible to detail all the intricacies of the game in just one review. But it's a refreshing change to see a game that emphasizes aesthetics above scoring, without sacrificing an iota of playability in the process. John O'Neill, artist turned game designer, has succeeded in what he set out to do — to produce a great game that appeals to the psyche as well as the trigger finger.

(Tracy Forman)

PENTAPUS

Turning Point/Apple II/48K disk

Just exactly what is this beast doing in outer space? It looks like an octopus. But wait! There's one. . .two. . .three. . .four. . .five — five tentacles. That makes him a. . .pentapus!

What is most evident from playing this product of the bent mind of Jeremy Sagan is that there is some imagination and a past history of game playing in a blend here.

Imagination comes to the foreground early just in the names of the nasties you must get past to take a shot at the Pentapus. First there is the Drangel, then the C-Alien, next the Eagull, then the Naga and finally the Whirr. Each is worth a successively larger point total and each is successively more dangerous.

There are four levels of play, including one designed specifically for children. Each level uses a joystick for play. The stick moves the colored box on the screen, which represents your Stargate.

Pressing the first button on the stick causes any invader directly over the box to disappear. Pressing the second button will cause the box you control to decrease in size, making it easier to avoid the bombs being dropped by these meanies.

Get through three waves successfully, and then comes the battle with the Pentapus and the Whirrs.

First the Whirrs must be eliminated in the same fashion as the aliens in the first four waves, then the Pentapus

COMPUTER GAMING

must be lined up for a shot directly between the eyes. If that is accomplished the game moves up a level, and starts over again, this time with intensified attacks.

The game features a pause feature and a procedure to save the top 10 scores to disk.

Overall, the game owes much of its look to *Galaxian* for the pattern in which the invaders form and attack, but there is just enough new strategy that must be developed for the different firing mechanism to keep even the most accomplished *Galaxian* player befuddled, at least for a while.

(Rick Teverbaugh)

MONTY PLAYS SCRABBLE

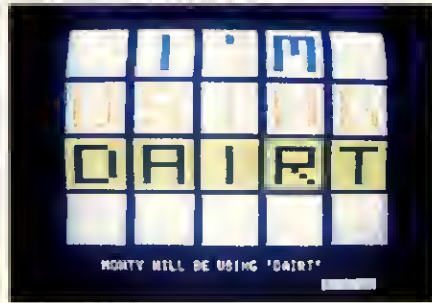
Personal Software/Apple II/48K disk

If you're a gamer of few words, then don't waste any of them on *Monty Plays Scrabble*. If you enjoy word games, on the other hand, this is it.

This is the home computer version



Monty Plays Scrabble is chock full of options and features. Besides displaying the board (above), Monty also permits players to challenge words (bottom).



of the classic board game. It recreates all the best features of this traditional favorite and also provides a formidable software opponent at the punch of a few keys.

When the game is booted, there is first an introduction to *Monty*. Then comes the naming of the players and the selection from one to four skill levels for *Monty*.

Tiles are then drawn for each player and the game can begin.

No other tools, such as a pencil, note pad or even a game board are needed to play the computer version. The screen display at the start of each player's turn shows the entire board and gives the player several options.

On any given turn a participant may check the tiles, see the point values of each letter, exchange tiles, pass a turn, save the game to disk, display point totals for each player, change *Monty's* skill level or input a word.

When entering a word, the screen display shifts to a blank row on which the word can be typed. The screen display shifts back to the board and eight directional keys are used to position the word properly on the board. Then it's up to *Monty* or any of the other players on whether to challenge that word. Players must use a dictionary to determine challenges.

When it is *Monty's* turn to play, the length of time he takes to make a decision is determined by the skill level selected. The "ESC" key recalls *Monty* to the table at the gamer's bidding, and he must make his best play at that moment.

There is even one feature that allows you to switch tiles with *Monty*, should you think he's getting all the best draws.

Graphics aren't a strong point with this game, but then those special touches aren't really necessary to make this an outstanding reproduction of the board game. *Monty Plays Scrabble* belongs at the very top of the computer strategy games currently on the market.

(Rick Teverbaugh)



CYCLOTRON

Sensible Software/Apple II/48K disk

Aside from a clumsy firing control system that may take some getting used to, *Cyclotron* is a rather unique invasion repulsion game.

The *Cyclotron* is the source of power for an entire outer space empire, making it a likely target for alien attack. Accelerator tubes, which feed energy to the *Cyclotron*, are the paths the enemy launches take to make their assault. Each hit received during one of these attacks brings an individual cyber crystal closer to failure. If a crystal is hit four times, it destroys all the other crystals and ends the game.

The computerist's ship patrols the area, trying to repel the attacks. The ship is controlled with the paddle, yet firing is done from the keyboard. The "A" key fires toward the top of the screen and the "Z" key shoots downward. Two other aids are the "1" key, which destroys everything on the screen, but is available only once during each round, and the space bar, which can repair a damaged crystal. All keys can be redefined at the user's choice.

There are four speeds of attackers, ranging from the slowest, Rollers, to the fastest, Flappers. The gamer begins with two lines, one of which is taken away if a crystal is destroyed. Bonus lives are available for reaching 10 levels.

Should you destroy one round of attackers without losing a crystal — and that is tough for the novice — a spy ship appears at random in the tubes and can be hit for bonus points.

The graphics aren't extraordinary here and using the paddle-keyboard combination for control is awkward, at least in the beginning. What makes this game easy to recommend is the system of play, which is both challenging and unique.

The most obvious method of improving control would be to use a two-button joystick, with one button to control an upward shot and the other button would be used for the downward shot. The stick itself, of course, could be used for linear movement across the screen.

This gamer found that a small base paddle could be kept alongside the keyboard or held in the lap and controlled with one hand, while the other hand worked the keyboard controls. The system isn't perfect, but it's worth trying!

(Rick Teverbaugh)

GAME-A-THON

ASTROBLITZ

Creative Software/VIC-20/cartridge

Astroblitz isn't overwhelmingly original, but those who like arcade-style scrolling shoot-outs with top-notch graphics and fast, fast action, are likely to love Tom Griner's games. (Tom is also the designer who gave us *Pre-*



ASTROBLITZ (CREATIVE SOFTWARE)

dator and I suspect many other first-rate VIC-20 games.)

The computerist commands a rocket plane flying across a planet's surface. Dangerous gun towers constantly try to eliminate the craft with small but lethal explosives. The sky isn't empty, either; U.F.O.s, bombs and guppies — or, flying fish-like creatures — make the air lanes exceedingly dangerous. Some fire and some don't, but collide with any and it's good-bye, rocket plane.

There are also buildings on the surface, which can't be destroyed, so they take on the role of obstacles in the game.

If this all sounds somewhat run-of-the-mill, what raises this game above the ordinary isn't so much what it does as how it does it. The graphics are superlative by VIC-20 standards. The colorful objects stand out clearly against a black velvet background, and the movements of the various game elements are equally fabulous. Even the sound effects are above average.

And if a gamer ever had the feeling that the VIC-20 isn't really much like

other computers when it comes to game-playing, she'll find a number of niceties here to counteract that sensation.

Gamers can enter their initials on a vanity board if their score warrants it. A joystick is required, but it seems unlikely any gamer would want it any other way.

All in all, this is the kind of game VIC-20 owners have been waiting for. Take a bow, Mr. Griner!

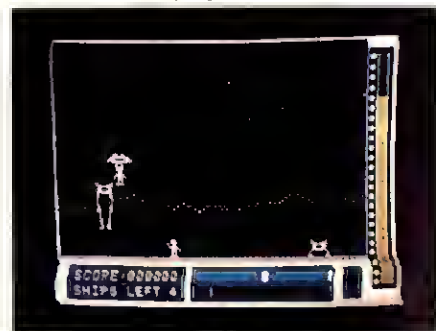
(Charlene Komar)

LUNAR LEEPER

Sierra On-Line/Atari/40K disk

Two basic screens alternate in *Lunar Leeper*. The first depicts the surface, the second below it. The object of the first screen, a plain between two cliffs, is to rescue helpless humans surrounded by hungry leepers. In the second screen, the gamer's ship navigates a cave and destroys a giant eye protected by laser turrets and Trabant (small, but armed, eyelike objects). Each successive level becomes more crowded with nasty little leepers and their allies.

Unfortunately, the game presents no real challenge due to flaws in the play-mechanic and design concept. For example, the leepers are too-easily defeated. The player simply waits until



LUNAR LEEPER (SIERRA ON-LINE)

they leap and then blasts them. Also, there isn't enough reinforcement for saving humans. Since 1,000 bonus points are awarded for each leeper remaining at the end of the rack versus a 500-point penalty for humans lost, it's more advantageous to let the leepers eat the humans than risk a ship which may be needed later.

Lunar Leeper is an amusing game for an inexperienced gamer, but not for someone who loves *Defender* or *Choplifter*!

(Vincent Puglia)

APPLE PANIC

Creative Software/VIC-20/cartridge

Apple Panic combines a space invasion theme with a climbing/digging play-mechanic in a fashion very similar to Space Panic.

The screen is divided into brick floors with ladders connecting each level. The player's character, a man armed with a pickaxe, is attacked by aimlessly wandering apple monsters. In order to destroy the apples, the home arcader must dig holes in the brick floors and then lure the monsters into the trap. Once an apple has fallen into a hole, the character beats it



APPLE PANIC (CREATIVE SOFTWARE)

over the head until it turns into brick. When all the apple monsters in a screen are destroyed, the game moves on to the next screen, which is even more crowded.

Because the game is open-ended — the screens don't differ, only the number of monsters — gamers are advised to develop a strategy early on. For example, the character can surround himself with holes, fall through one of them (a fall can't harm him, only the apples), and go to another area to dig more holes. Even if the gamer can't get back in time to destroy all the apples which fall in the holes, at least they'll be immobilized for a short while.

Finally, the high-resolution graphics are excellent, and the pause feature is much-appreciated.

(Vincent Puglia)

RAT HOTEL

Creative Software/VIC-20/cartridge

Rat Hotel is a combination maze-

COMPUTER GAMING

chase/elevator game, complete with "power pills" in the form of cheese.

The object is to eat the big cheese in the basement of the hotel. In order to accomplish this, the gamer must first clear the other floors of their slabs of blue and orange cheese while avoiding the black cheese. A three-minute time limit is imposed. Trying to prevent the human directed rat from doing this are Waldo, the maintenance man and his traps. Once a floor has been cleared, the player travels to another by moving to one of two corners, pushing the joystick in the appropriate direction and waiting for the elevator.

Essentially, waiting is the game, that and an occasional scurrying for cover. Granted, the rat can attack Waldo, but no points are gained for doing so and it's rarely ever necessary. In addition, although the graphics are adequate, they leave much to be desired.

(Vincent Puglia)

SCORPION

Tronix/VIC-20/cartridge

Don't be misled by the insect title — this is not another Centipede-style game. Instead, Scorpion is a clever effort with elements of a maze game as well as a chase-and-fetch — capped off with a shoot-out.

Basically, the home arcader battles against a variety of predators that range from venus flytraps (which also furnish precious air) to deadly pod mothers. While the defender dodges or slays these nasties, he must also search for food. This isn't a case of bringing home the bacon, it's bringing home the frogs, or, even better, frog eggs.

Finding the eggs and getting them home before they hatch is the best way to add up points. It goes without



SCORPION (TRONIX)

saying, then, that it's also very tough. Next best is to go after the new-born frogs, stun them and drag them home before they wake up.

Jimmy Huey's game is challenging enough to be quite interesting at the first couple of levels, and quickly becomes very hard indeed with the predators multiplying—and getting faster, smarter and nastier.

There are four modes of play, including a helpful demo. Within the game are 32 levels. Each starts with five scorpions, with bonus ones awarded at point tallies that vary with each mode. A vanity board is available for high-scorers.

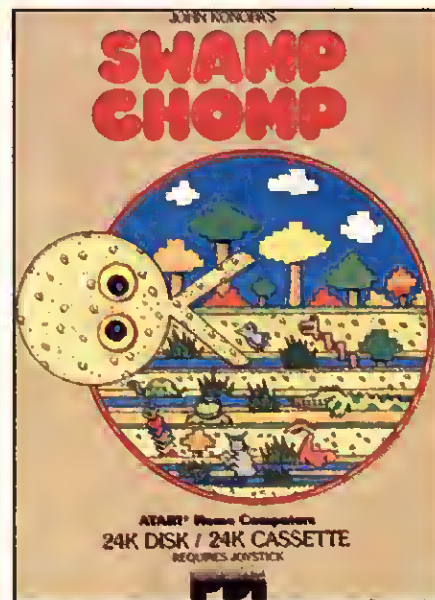
This is a clever and interesting game that resists falling into the trap of slavish imitation. Definitely outstanding.

(Charlene Komar)

SWAMP CHOMP

PDI/Atari/24K disk

Swamp Chomp is a road-crossing game in which the player controls a gorx (a small swamp creature) on its



SWAMP CHOMP (PDI)

way to a feeding station. If the crossing is without mishap, the gorx metamorphoses into a swamp chomper, at which point the hunted becomes the hunter. All of this — the first crossing and the return crossing with its chomping mode — must occur within a 40-second time limit, of which only nine seconds are allotted for chomping. Points are awarded for food eaten while in the station, for early return home, and for creatures eaten during chomp mode.

Every creature isn't easy pickings. The bats are to be avoided always, and the occasional ghost — which, when

eaten, resets the chomp clock at nine seconds — also enjoys dining on gorx.

Another twist John Konopa, of **Moonbase 10** fame, designed into the game is the two-player option. This version awards points if one gorx eats the other. However, should a gorx return to the wrong home station, any bonus points for early return are added to the opponent's score. (This brings up an interesting concept. What if gamers decided to help each other out by deliberately landing on their opponent's home station?)

The 13 screens grow progressively more difficult. The centipedes in the roads become longer and the flying machines, which aid the gorx in the crossing, become less common. As a result, the player really does need the seven gorxa he or she begins the game with.

Swamp Chomp is a must for those gamers who wished the frog in *Frogger* weren't so helpless and a good library addition for anyone else.

Now let's get hopping!

(Vincent Puglia)

THINK TANK

MURDER ON THE ZINDERNEUF

Electronic Arts/Atari Computers/32K disk

Freefall Associates has again combined innovative game design with sheer playability in the world's first action/text murder mystery. **Murder on the Zinderneuf** is set aboard a luxury dirigible in the year 1936. Sixteen people set out on the pleasure cruise, but only 15 return. (With each new game, the computer generates a new victim, motive, and killer, making this game different every time it's played.)

How fortunate that one of the world's most respected detectives (the player) is also along for the ride. Can the supersleuth find the right clues, talk to the right people, and accuse the guilty party before the ship lands (about 45 minutes real time)? If not — according to the instruction booklet —

"Somebody's going to get away with murder."

Before actually starting the game, the computerist steps into the gumshoes of a world-famous detective. There are eight "roles" to choose from, including the bumbling Chief Inspector Klutzeau, rumpiled Lt. Cincinnati, elderly Miss Agatha Marbles, and ultra-macho Harry Hacksaw.

Each detective is unique in the way he/she approaches people, and the suspects are likely to respond in kind. Consequently, some of the detectives are harder to play than others. Besides, most people would rather confide in a sweet old lady than get beat up by a supercop. To further the role-playing experience, each time a suspect is questioned, the gamer has a choice of five approaches to take. For example, Klutzeau has "bumbling" and "con-

fused" among his choices, while sexy Charity Flaire might try a more feminine approach like "helpless".

Only one kind of question can be asked of any suspect: "Tell me about (whoever)." The suspect's response depends on the approach the player chooses. Also, just because an approach worked on one suspect is no reason to assume the next person will respond just as well. The people on-board the Zinderneuf are individual characters, so players are advised to take into account who they're dealing with at the moment.

The joystick controls all movement of the detective aboard the airship, and it's also used to make choices whenever the screen prompts the gamer. For example, when the detective runs into someone in a corridor or room, the joystick is pressed to choose between "Question", "Ignore", or "Accuse Suspect". Sleuths should make sure they have enough evidence before pointing any fingers, though, because once a person has been accused, he or she will totally ignore the detective for the remainder of the game. Only the right combination of physical evidence and established motive gets the guilty party to confess, while a too-hasty accusation — even against the killer — costs points from the final rating assigned at the end of the game. Luckily, when the Zinderneuf lands, players are given the option of making one final accusation.

Whether or not the case is solved, gamers always find out at the end who killed the victim — and why.

The most impressive feature of *Murder on the Zinderneuf* is the computer's ability to generate a different scenario every time a new game is played. This reviewer has played more than 50 games and has yet to see a repeat. And each and every time, the plot makes perfect sense! Considering the magnitude of such a programming feat, it shouldn't come as a disappointment to learn that the graphics are a bit sparse and there's very little in the way of sound effects. It takes practice to learn the layout of the dirigible and to be able to distinguish different characters at a glance. Still, this game is definitely worth the effort.

With its varied, interesting cast of characters, plus the opportunity to really role-play, *Murder on the Zinderneuf* is a mind-stretching treat for armchair detectives everywhere, and each game is a half hour or so well-spent.

(Tracie Forman)



Gamers with pre-GTIA chip Ataris will not get this kind of color.

CHIVALRY

Designed by Richard Hefter,
Jane and Steve Worthington
Weekly Reader/Apple II/48K disk

The word "ornate" barely describes Chivalry's sumptuous packaging. The red-trimmed slipcase holds an illustrated 18-page guidebook, a colorful 20-in by 12½-in. poster, a bound 18 in. by 17 in. gameboard, four plastic pieces and, of course, a floppy disk.

Weekly Reader (a Xerox division) is engaging in a bit of hyperbole by suggesting "8-99!" as an age-range for this computer game/boardgame hybrid. Adults may enjoy trying to rescue



CHIVALRY (WEEKLY READER)

the good King from his imprisonment by the Black Knight, but the eight-to-12-year-old set are apt to like it best.

Chivalry is a "finish first" boardgame for one to four knights and ladies enhanced by material displayed on the Apple's CRT. After giving the computer the gender, name and turn-order of the participants — a process that takes under five minutes — players begin trekking along the winding road that leads from the Fair Castle in the upper left corner to the Black Knight's fortress in the lower right.

The computer rolls a die or spins a wheel to generate movement of one, two or three spaces for a player. The

COMPUTER GAMING

animation in the die-rolling sequence is a revelation — and quite indicative of the high level of art and graphics found throughout the game. The knight or lady then moves the appropriate piece to the indicated space on the gameboard, and the computer responds on the screen.

Frequently, the computer presents a mini-game. Players can fight jousts, compete at darts and archery, show their prowess with a catapult and negotiate mazes which are patrolled by minions of the Black Knight. There are also a few logic tests somewhat in the adventure game mode, but even youngsters should be able to get through safely. In any case, the penalties for failure are slight, usually a forced backward move or the loss of a turn.

The mini-games are fairly easy, except for the catapult shoot at the drawbridge of the Black Knight's Castle and the subsequent climb up the inside wall of the stronghold. These final challenges repeatedly defeated the three arcade aces who played in this EG test.

Assuming there's at least one competent player in the group, Chivalry can be played within an hour and a half. The program's on-screen messages are shown in large, easy-to-read type, broken up into short lines. Since the messages are often cute — or downright funny — even halting readers will be encouraged to scan the display. Still, Chivalry is not overtly an educational game. Rather, it is a wholesome recreation that's ideal for a family-oriented afternoon.

(Arnie Katz)

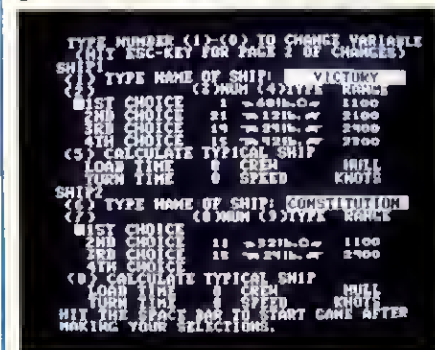
ing canisters, and the way a few of the other officers tested their swords in their scabbards, I didn't need the Captain's shouted order to "prepare to grapple" to realize that we were going to try to board.

Surrounded by a cloud of salt spray in the midst of the wide Atlantic, I could feel my mouth go as dry as powder. Still, there was something about riding that three-decker ragwagon into a battle royale that I wouldn't have traded for any farm in Sussex.

No other computer game comes close to capturing the flavor and ex-



The title page of *BroadSides* puts players in the mood for sailing. The menu screen below is only one of three which allows gamers to customize their sailing ship.



citement of Napoleonic Era sea battles in the manner of *BroadSides*, one of the latest releases from Strategic Simulations. For ship-to-ship battles, this is as near as most of us will ever come to treading the deck of a commissioned first-rate ship of the line.

When you first boot the disk, it is immediately obvious that *BroadSides* is designed to be played in two ways. The manual refers to them as the arcade and tactical levels of play. It's one of the first choices a would-be admiral must make on the main, multiple-choice structured, menu screen. Yet both games can be played at 10 levels of speed, and the tactical game can be even more of a real-time challenge than the arcade version. The main difference is that the commands and choices are more realistic in the tactical version.

ARTICLES OF WAR

BROADSIDES

Strategic Simulations/Apple II/48K disk

The salt spray was a constant rain I no longer felt, no more than I noticed the rolling of the deck beneath me after so many months at sea, although the sound of the enemy's guns, not 500 yards away, was a thunder far louder than any of old Neptune's storms.

They were firing chain shot. Above me, I heard a sail rip and a mast splinter

as the ship shuddered under the blow.

The Captain roared out his order to back sails, the First Officer beside me responded with a crisp "Aye, Aye, Sir!" As he turned to relay the order, he smiled at me — shoring up the newest Ensign's courage, I realized. I tried to smile back.

Another roar as our own starboard broadside fired a charge of grape shot at the enemy. From the hail-like sound of the grape, the shrapnel of explod-

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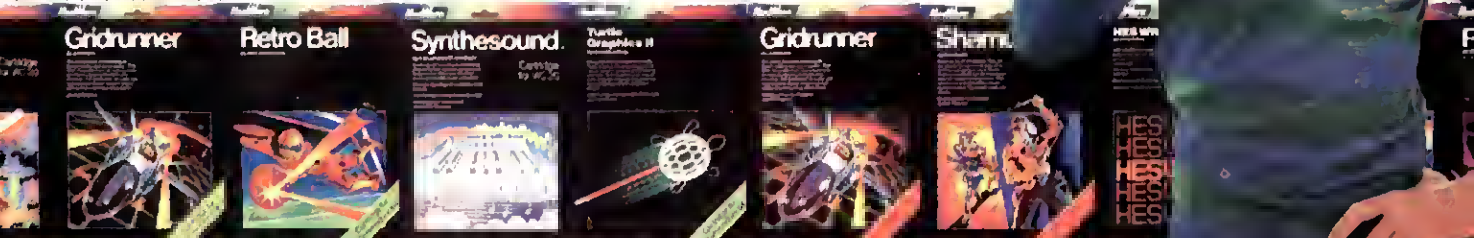
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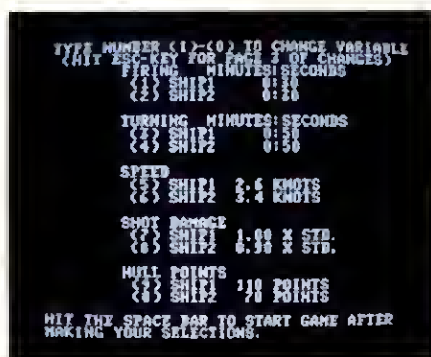
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(in California
800 632-7979)
Dept. C20



Both are fought on the same two displays — The Sailing Screen and The Boarding Screen. These screens feature realistic, high-resolution graphics and animation, while providing all the complex informational output and ability to input commands that wargamers look for.

To the left of the Sailing Screen is an overhead view of the two ships engaged. Ship 1 is depicted in violet and Ship 2 in green. This overhead view automatically shifts scale and location to keep the maneuvering ships in view.

To the right of the overhead view, the screen is dominated by two very detailed silhouettes of the ships. Beneath each ship, much information is listed. Just under the name of the ship is the command line. This line's content is controlled by the Captain's game paddle. As you rotate the game paddle, a different order is displayed and, if it is the desired one, you press the button to issue that command. In a

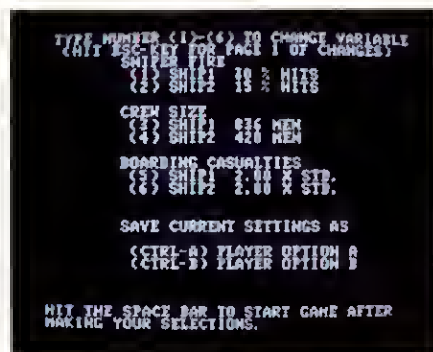


two-player game, both captains have a paddle; if you are fighting against Captain Computer, the machine's command line always displays "Aye, Aye, Sir!" Also listed in this area is information about the number on hale and hearty crew, intact hull units, maximum possible speed for the ship, present speed, and a gun-by-gun breakdown of the cannonry on both port and starboard broadsides. Back on the left side of the screen, beneath the overhead view, are the time of day, present wind direction and speed, along with a cumulative readout of each player's victory points. As the game progresses, the detailed ship silhouettes change to show the actual damage to the sails, masts and hull.

The orders that each ship can issue accurately reflect the intricate sea-dance that such ocean-going maidens of war actually performed. Each command the captain gives, each action the crew takes, happens when it should. These ships do not turn on a

dime, and neither is loading a full broadside as easy or quick as preparing a simple artillery piece. The successful captain in this game, as in the 18th and 19th centuries, will be the one who best understands his ship's capabilities and can time the maneuvering and firing to the absolute split-second.

The orders in the full, tactical, version cover almost all aspects of ship-to-ship combat. The player may issue



The Boarding Screen (right) brings gamers right on deck for hand-to-hand combat. The Sailing Screen (below) features an overhead view and a statistical readout on gunnery and crew's health. The two menu screens (left and above) permit gamers to set variables in the game.



ATARI COIN VIDEO
GAMES PRESENTS THE
ADVENTURES OF

MAJOR HAVOC™

You are MAJOR HAVOC™, leader of the clone army. You are all from one, one from all, fighting for humanity...

CONDITION RED
GARBAGE EJECTED
DESTROY ENEMY SHIPS



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You fly through a wormhole in space defending your ship against robot assault. You move in to land on the surface of the space station.

Now you must move strategically through the maze interior toward the enemy reactor. Time is limited to destroy it and make your escape!

ATARI
A Warner Communications Company

MAJOR HAVOC challenges you with two games in one! It fuses space adventure with maze running adventure to bind what is really a video comic book into a game of incredible depth that you'll want to play over and over. Ready for a refreshing change of space? Give MAJOR HAVOC a shot! For all the hottest playing tips, write to MAJOR HAVOC STAR JOURNAL, Atari Coin Games, Dept. EG, Box 906, Milpitas, CA 95035.

from the beginning of the program. These three screens present a wide range of choices which will allow you to customize play to just about every type of ship, as well as allowing you to adjust play-mechanics.

The manual lists various ships of the period and details their physical makeup and crew complement. With that information, using the three variable screens, you can "build" your own ships. In this way you can simulate just about any historical ship-to-ship combat of the period.

The gamer can also change such things as the amount of damage a ship's broadside inflicts, firing and loading times, turning times, possible speed, hull points, and such. After you have changed everything from a ship's name to its speed you can save the whole thing on disk. Unfortunately, only two such player options can be saved at a time, so you will not be able to have a fleet of ship types at your beck and call. Although the changes are so easy to make that the whole process takes just a few minutes.

Missing from the manual is any in-depth discussion of the tactics actually used in this type of fighting. Although the manual does detail how one ship can rake another (pass perpendicular to it so that it's broadsides have full effect while the enemy cannot fire) and cause double the damage, it should have been mentioned that this "crossing the tee" maneuver is crucial to playing the game. It is just about the only way a player can inflict damage without endangering his own ship.

Getting a ship into position to rake means you must achieve what commanders of the time period called "the weather gauge." Because a ship can-

COMPUTER GAMING

not sail directly into the wind, a wise tactician puts the ship between the enemy and the wind. In this way, all the maneuverability is yours. The ship in the less-favored or "lee" position will find itself at a decided disadvantage in maneuvering. However, as a ship with the weather gauge approaches, the ship in the lee position can back sail and attempt its own raking maneuver.

Boarding, in actual combat, was a very costly business. Many battles were decided on the basis of what happened on the grappled decks. Testing encourages using the variable screens to increase sword fight casualties by a factor of three to better reflect historical battles.

While the majority of real engagements were fought in immense fleet vs. fleet lines, this computer program only simulates two ships at a time. But there are enough historical two-ship battles to keep even the most exacting wargamer happy, and the ability to design and then fight ships is a decided plus. Perhaps someday SSI will release a version that allows multiple ship combat — but that is just about the only major improvement that could be made to this game which deserves the often misused title of "classic."

Of all the wargames this reviewer has seen, both on the computer screen and the gaming table, *Broadsides* does the best job of capturing the flavor, the excitement and the actual reality behind battles under sail.

Excuse me, the wind's changing.
(Neil Shapiro)

hockey simulation ever designed is now available for the Atari computers, on cartridge, courtesy of the English-based Thorn EMI. **Major League Hockey** is a horizontally scrolling, three-screen-wide masterpiece that will have even fans in the cheap seats howling with delight.

Adapting techniques introduced in its ground-breaking **Soccer** simulation, Thorn presents a team game with no head-to-head action and, more interestingly, no refs or linesmen. In other words, while up to four gamers can play simultaneously, they will all be cooperating on the same team against the computer. The machine assigns each gamer a number that corresponds to the joystick port into which their controller is inserted. By hitting the action button, the player nearest the puck — who is not already under control — becomes that gamer's on-ice surrogate. You can pass or shoot at this point by aiming the joystick in the desired direction and firing.



MAJOR LEAGUE HOCKEY (THORN EMI)

Some points to keep in mind:

- * Time-outs are unlimited. Hit any key on the console and the action pauses until another key is struck, picking up the game where it left off.
- * It takes a split second to take control of a skater. While a player is temporarily replaced by its corresponding joystick, it is paralyzed, so make sure that you have at least a small lead on the opposing player before taking control of the puck carrier. The computer does a good enough job covering the men not under your guidance.

This is full-team hockey. In solitary games, the computerist is basically a player-coach. Keep an eye on your team and always remember your own position. Also, unlike Thorn's *Soccer*, in which the man carrying the ball moves slower than pursuers,

ELECTRONIC PRESSBOX

MAJOR LEAGUE HOCKEY

Thorn EMI/Atari/16K cartridge

There is no doubt about it: Sports fans are the single most neglected faction in the computer software universe. While an arcade full of action games and a treasure trove of the latest adventure and quest contests fill **EG's** oversized mailbox each day, sports simulations of any quality traditionally show up about as often as a

diamond ring in a crackerjack box.

Finally, though, some intrepid pioneers such as Gamestar, Commodore and Thorn EMI are beginning to fill the gap. Even the programmable world is getting great sports titles for virtually every system. Until now, however, hockey fans haven't been able to get into the game.

Well stop pouting and put down that beer, because the greatest ice

skaters carrying the puck lose no velocity. In fact, once you've got a head of steam up, it's a piece of cake to fake around defenders, especially if they're standing still.

- * Look for the breakout pass. With plenty of room between the puck-carrier and opposing players, take control and bring him down the right side, shooting from near the face-off circle. The computer-controlled goalies are especially vulnerable to these shots.
- * One defender should *always* be kept back in front of your goalie. This way, when an opposing forward invades your zone, assign control to the defenseman and strip him of the puck. This often provides enough time to break free from down either side while the computer moves a forward back to cover your goalie.
- * The graphics are so beautiful and the skaters so large it will be easy to follow them, but remember that all your men won't usually

be on the screen!

- * Until you've become very good, let the computer play goalie. Also, take the *player* not the *puck*. Herb Brooks will be proud of you.

Finally, there is the matter of the lack of officials. Boys will be boys, and therefore both teams occasionally collide for a brief melee. Take advantage of the fact that no one can get hurt or penalized and send your men into the fracas. Then assign the player nearest the puck to go and scoop it up and throw it into the, usually, empty net.

Except for the interchangeability of players (even your goalie can take off and put one in this simulation, while the computer has another player cover the net) and the high scoring, this is as perfect a re-creation of the world's fastest team sport as ever you've seen!

Unless you're Wayne Gretsky, this is the closest you'll ever come to racing up-ice and whacking that little rubber disc past a startled goal-tender.

Thorn deserves a Madison Square Garden standing "O" for this one.

(Bill Kunkel)

PLAYING IT SMART

Now that more and more computers are finding their way into homes, many gamers are looking into educational software. To help them choose from the plethora of programs being released, **EG** proudly presents its first installment of *Playing It Smart* with this issue.

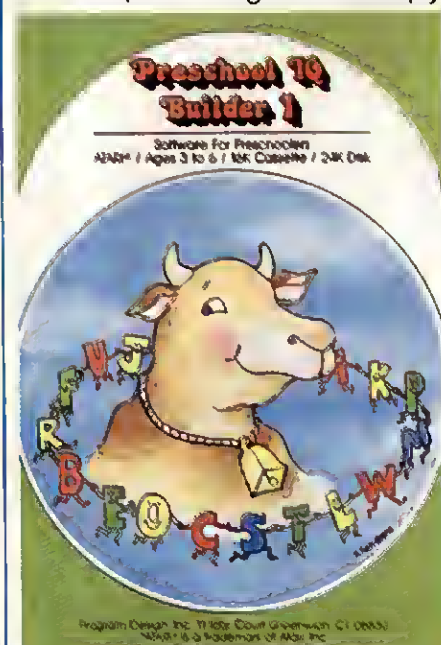
PRESCHOOL IQ BUILDERS

Program Design, Inc./Atari/24K disk each

Many educational games are either too concerned with the graphics and the play-mechanic or overly dependent on drills. In the first case, the education is secondary to the game; in the second, Jack becomes a sullen boy. Fortunately, the **Preschool IQ Builders** from PDI commit neither sin.

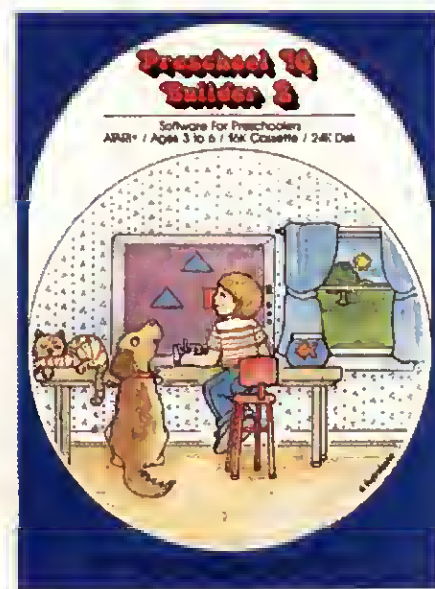
Essentially, both programs in the series deal with pattern recognition. They both provide for positive reinforcement and allow the preschooler to continue guessing until the correct answer is found. In addition, the child's progress can be checked at any point in the lesson.

In six (color, shape, big letters, capital letters, figures, and small letters) of the eight lessons in **Preschool IQ Builder 1**, the recognition is simply



PRESCHOOL IQ BUILDER 1 (PDI)

deciding whether two objects are the same or different. The child registers the answer through the joystick. (A push forward signifies the figures are the same.) A correct answer is rewarded with a smiling face. Should the child answer incorrectly, the face frowns. In the last two lessons (capital letter match and small letter match), three letters appear on the screen — one in the center of the screen and two on the bottom. The child moves the joystick either left or right to light up the matching letter on the bottom and

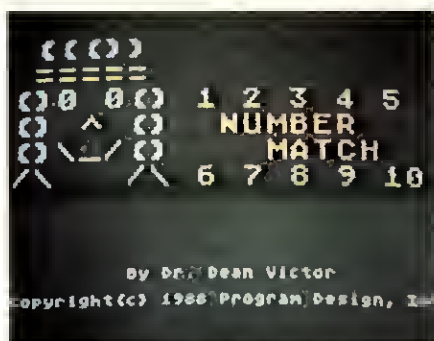


PRESCHOOL IQ BUILDER 2 (PDI)

pushes the fire button to register the match.

In **Preschool IQ Builder 2**, which consists of six lessons, the child guides the letter, number, shape or word in the center of the screen over the matching object at the bottom of the screen and registers the answer with the fire button. If the match is correct, the child is rewarded with an animated character and a song. Incorrect answers elicit a question mark and a noise. Nine skill levels, from two to 10, provide for the child's development growth. With each of the levels, an additional figure is added to those on the bottom of the screen.

The educators at PDI are so serious about education that they include, in the documentation, activities the parents can conduct with their children to reinforce the concepts taught in the programs. Also, they had their programs tested and found they truly do teach—see January's Hotline. Few other software companies can make the same claim. However, the best part is children seem to enjoy themselves as they learn with the *Preschool*



PRESCHOOL IO BUILDER 2 (PDI)

IQ Builders. And although the name may be a misnomer, it still doesn't affect the game's effectiveness.

(Vincent Puglia)

DRAGON'S KEEP

Programmed by Al Lowe,
Written by Mike MacChesney
Sierra On-Line/Apple II/48K disc

Dragon's Keep cuts adventure gaming down to pint-size. A dragon has captured and hidden 16 animals, and it's up to the adventurer to free them from captivity. But first they must be found, by moving around the *Dragon's Keep* world to find and free them.

The adventure starts with a view of the dragon's house, a cozy Cape Cod cottage with a large yard. The computer asks if the gamer would rather climb a ladder to an upstairs window, go in the front door, or walk around to the backyard. Depending on the choice, the next scene unfolds, and again offers choices of what to do. If

COMPUTER GAMING

he climbs the ladder, the next view is a bedroom. Then the gamer must choose whether to look under the bed, in a toy box, or go to the next room. A look under the bed prompts the remark, "All you can see is dust. There must be something in the toy box." Opening the toy box reveals a kitten tangled in some string. The child then is asked if he'd rather pet the kitty, free the kitty, or close the box. Free the cat, and the computer offers its congratulations, then tells the gamer how many animals are still in captivity.

Dragon's Keep helps kids pick up valuable skills in reading text and maps. The game comes with a large, well-labeled map so that the child can relate each location in the adventure with the area depicted, and a compass decal-sticker to be placed on the monitor as a direction guide.

The computer's vocabulary is attuned to a second-grade level. When the program gives the choices at each decision point, the child uses the space bar to move a cursor to the desired response. Hitting the return key enters the selection. The game can be played with sound or in silent mode. Pressing the letter "F" tells the arcader how many animals have been freed.

Dragon's Keep has a pleasantly humorous ambience, plus lots of built-

in common sense. For example, at one point the gamer is asked whether to jump out of a tree or climb down carefully. If the child chooses "jump", the computer gently reprimands saying, "that's much too dangerous, you might get hurt. If you're going to finish this game, you have to be careful." In another scene, the computerist finds a tied-up bear, then is asked whether to wake up the bear, untie him, or go away to another location. If the youngster decides to wake up bruin, the computer advises against the wisdom of waking an angry bear, and says it would be better to untie him first.

The dragon doesn't just sit idly by while the animals are being rescued. He randomly appears in the pictures and when he's on the scene, it's impossible to save the animal. The dragon actually isn't too threatening though, since all it does is lurk about the edges of the picture. He never actually attacks anyone and is content just to stop the abduction of the animals.

Each scene is a hi-res painting, and the text with each drawing is short, concise and easy to understand, even for beginning adventurers. There's a lot of diversity in the scenes depicted in the game, as the computerist moves through the house, yard, and to other locations in the neighborhood. The sound track, on the other hand, is quite unpretentious and a few dragonish roars might have added a little spice.

There's hardly any young arcader who wouldn't get a kick out of *Dragon's Keep*. It's a good introduction to adventure gaming that's guaranteed to be easy enough to keep from daunting any youthful spirits, yet offers an entertaining challenge that kids will want to play over and over again.

(Joyce Worley)

TYPE ATTACK

Sirius/Atari/16K disk

Most educators would agree students have few problems learning a subject when the goals and procedures are clearly defined. For that reason, any manual skill is easier to learn than an esoteric subject—as long as the student practices. Aside from lack of practice, the biggest hindrance to skill-learning is lack of interest. The latter is not the case with Sirius' *Type Attack*. Designed by Jim Hauser and Ernie Brock, it is an interesting blend of education and gaming.



DRAGON'S KEEP (SIERRA ON-LINE)

What Has Your TV Set Done For You Lately?

Sure, watching "the tube" is enjoyable a lot of the time. But today, home entertainment is much more than just broadcast TV. Today, your TV set can bring you movies you choose yourself to play any time you like. Fun and games. Problem-solving, self-improvement, and personal security. Unique, priceless memories of family and friends. Art you create yourself. It's a whole new world . . . the fascinating world of video.

Whether you're a video veteran, a beginner just getting your feet wet, or someone intrigued with the thrilling possibilities the field offers now and for the future, VIDEO Magazine should be your guide to this world.

Every month, VIDEO will show you how to *use* your TV, not just watch it. You'll read news of and invaluable test reports on the latest video equipment. You'll find sources, previews, and reviews of pre-recorded programs to buy or rent. You'll learn helpful home taping techniques: using a video camera, lighting, dubbing in audio, creating video art. You'll profit from expert technical advice. You'll explore all the alternatives to broadcast TV available today and the developing technologies coming tomorrow.

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As implied by the name, *Type Attack* teaches the skill of typing. It accomplishes this task much in the same manner a teacher would — by controlled lessons designed to acquaint the user with the standard "qwerty" keyboard. For example, the first lesson covers the initial placement of the fingers of the left-hand. In addition, all of the lessons come in two parts: "Character Attack" and "Word Attack". However, unlike the traditional lessons, *Type Attack* is entertaining.

The "Character Attack" portion of the program resembles that tried-and-true arcade game, *Space Invaders*. Each "Character Attack" consists of three waves of eight columns of letters marching inexorably to the



TYPE ATTACK (SIRIUS)

bottom of the screen. Like the arcade game, when the columns touch the edge of the screen they drop down one horizontal level and begin to march in the opposite direction. Unlike most invasion games, however, the creatures don't drop missiles. Nor, for that matter, is there any need to aim a cannon. The player simply hits the proper letter to destroy the scrolling character.

In the "Word Attack" portion of the program, words based on the letters in that particular lesson scroll across the screen. They are destroyed by typing out the proper sequence of letters and then hitting the space bar. If a word goes off the left edge of the field, it reappears on the right, although a little bit closer to the bottom.

Errors, such as misspellings and incorrectly hit keys, are dealt with by a loss of energy. The more errors committed, the faster the loss. Once the energy level has dropped to zero, the game ends. In addition, space is allotted in the higher levels for user-developed lessons. This allows gamers to type in their own words so that they can improve not only their typing, but also their spelling.

COMPUTER GAMING

All in all, *Type Attack* is an excellent program, not only for its educational value, but also for its entertainment value. (Vincent Puglia)

ALPHABET ZOO

Designed by Dale Disharoon
Spinnaker/Commodore 64/cartridge

Kids can have a maze-full of fun with *Alphabet Zoo* as they race through the corridors gathering the letters that go with the picture on the screen. "The Letter Game" sends computerists through the maze seeking the first letter of the picture shown in mid-screen, while "The Spelling Game" lets them test their skills as they try to spell the word pictured. An assortment of musical sound effects accompanies the action.

Alphabet Zoo teaches some good lessons while it entertains. It helps young children strengthen their letter recognition skills, much the same way as alphabet books. Older kids can use it to perfect their spelling as they play in addition to deriving hand-eye coordination benefits from maneuvering through the maze. It's recommended for kids age 3 to 8, but the youngest players might need some parental supervision until they learn to spell simple words.

Gamers choose one- or two-player mode, then select whether the letters

will be all capitals, all small, or mixed upper and lower case. They can choose from six skill levels, then select game 1 or 2.

The playfield is a familiar-looking maze with a picture in the center of the screen. In each game the corridors are littered with letters for the gamer to scoop up before time runs out. If an apple is pictured, the child has to gather "a's" in order to score as many points as possible before time runs out in the "Letter Game". In the "Spelling Game", kids gather letters to spell "Apple", picking up each one in correct order.

Gamers get a lot of practice with joystick control as they move through the maze. The on-screen player has to be right in the center of each corridor in order to move easily; if it's touching the walls, it won't budge. Some pre-schoolers might be frustrated by this, but a little practice will correct the problem and build skill in hand-eye coordination.

The levels in each game advance the difficulty of the lessons. The "Letter Game" starts with pictures that are spelled using the easiest consonants: F, D, M, G and S. More difficult letters are used in each skill level up to level six where the entire alphabet is used to construct the words. In the "Spelling Game", level one uses two- and three-letter words, but the words get gradually longer up to level six, where they range from two to nine.

(Joyce Worley) G



ALPHABET ZOO (SPINNAKER)

Looking For Electronic Games?

If you have trouble finding ELECTRONIC GAMES at your local newsstand or want to know where to send a friend to pick up a copy, the following will help. It's a list of retail stores across the country that carry at least 25 copies of ELECTRONIC GAMES every month.

ALABAMA

Video Box Office, Birmingham

ARIZONA

Hollywood Connection, Phoenix

ARKANSAS

Video Express, Jacksonville
Pine Bluff Video, Pine Bluff
Hastings Books & Records, Rogers

CALIFORNIA

Game Room, Agoura
Video Station, Alameda
Prime Time Video, Anaheim
Stillwell Sales/International Video, Anaheim
Dimensions In Video, Auburn
C&W Video, Camarillo
O.J. Products, Campbell
Video Connection, Citrus Heights
Video Station, El Monte
The Works, Eureka
Coast Video, Fountain Valley
Computer Place, Glendale
Picture Show, Huntington Beach
Video Station, Laguna Hills
Video Co., Larkspur
Back Stage Video, Long Beach
Computer Seen, Long Beach
Show Industries, Los Angeles
Video 2001 Inc., Los Angeles
The Video Station, Mariposa
Video City, Ontario
Electronic Games, Orange
Sound Machine, Orange
Software Central, Pasadena
Brown Knowe Computing, Redlands
In Home Video, Riverside
Video Station, Rowland Heights
Access To Software, San Francisco
Videolend, San Francisco
Computer Center Stores, San Jose
Moviola, Santa Clara
Games, Gage, Gifts, Tahoe City
Games, Van Nuys
Video Etc., West Covina

COLORADO

Sweet's Tapes & Records, Anvada
National Video #06003, Aurora
American Home Theater, Colorado Springs

CONNECTICUT

Video Connection, Bridgeport
Video Studio II, East Windsor
Family Hobbies, Norwalk
Video Studio Six, Wethersfield

DELAWARE

Video Station, Wilmington

WASHINGTON, DC

Program Store #5200

FLORIDA

Electronics Depot Inc., Altamonte Springs
Video City, Fort Lauderdale
Fort Myers Video Movie Center, Fort Myers
Movie Market #2, Melbourne Beach
Jeff Vid Inc./DBA Video, Miami
Orange Blossom Hobbies, Miami
Specs Music, Miami
Hastings Records, Pinellas Park
Video Corner, Pinellas Park
Hastings Records, Tampa
Video X Tron North Inc., West Palm Beach
Video Trends, Winter Haven
Independent Computer Systems, Winter Park

GEORGIA

Video Connection, Marietta

IDAHO

Video Connection, Boise

ILLINOIS

Rich Little Presents, Amooch
Video Shop, Brookfield
Devon Hobby Models Inc., Chicago
Les-On Drugs, Chicago
Video Connection, Chicago
Video Tape Gallery, Chicago
Glenwood Distributors, Collinsville
Countyside Home Video, Countryside
Electronic Playground, Decatur
Video Dimensions, Des Plaines
Video Basics Inc., Joliet

Video Station, Kankakee
R.J. Hobby & Electronics Center, Murphysboro
Classic Video, Oak Lawn
Sound Warehouse, Oak Lawn
Westchester Video, Westchester
Video Hotline, Winnetka

INDIANA

Bytex, Fort Wayne
Ark of Indy Inc., Indianapolis
Video Shack Inc., Indianapolis
World of Video, Indianapolis
Record Cellar Audio/Video, Vincennes

IOWA

National Video, Cedar Rapids

KANSAS

Hollywood At Home, Overland Park

LOUISIANA

Video Connection, Metairie
Hastings Records, Shreveport

MAINE

Discount Video Order, Bar Harbor

MARYLAND

Program Store Inc. #5201, Baltimore
Video Explosion Inc., Baltimore
Video Connection, Beltsville
Video Connection, Bowie
Video Connection, Cockeysville
Video Worlds, Ellicott City
Lou-Ryan Inc., Hagerstown
Program Store #5203, Kensington
Video Connection, Olney
Reisterstown Video Inc., Reisterstown
Computerland, Rockville
Computer Age, Silver Spring
Greetings & Readings, Towson

MASSACHUSETTS

Game-Tech, Arlington
Name of the Game, Boston
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Video World, Carver
Act I Video Inc., Dracut
Corner Sports Store, New Bedford
LCA Video Center & Studio, Norwood
Taylor Sound Inc., Pittsfield
Video Paradise, Plymouth
Freeze Frame Inc., Saugus
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Video Connection, Worcester

MICHIGAN

Motor City Drugs & Video, Dearborn
Moviecraze Video, Detroit
Just Software, East Detroit
Video Connection, Farmington Hills
Live Wire, Gladwin
Video Today, Holland
Home Video Outlets, Lansing
Video Connection #140, Madison Heights
Horsley's Village Green, Midland
Signal Service, Napoleon
Futurists Inc., Port Huron
Abbot Video, Roseville
Record Cellar, Sterling Heights
Maxtron Corp., Warren
New York Video World, Warren
Rite Way Enterprises, Warren

MINNESOTA

Video Connection, Bloomington
Adventures In Video, Crystal
Games By James, Edina
Discount Video, Minneapolis
Games By James, Minnetonka

MISSISSIPPI

Take-One Video, Long Beach

MISSOURI

Show Biz Video, Chesterfield
KCS Videorama, Florissant
Music Box, North Kansas City
Harvest Plaza Video, St. Charles

MONTANA

Video Computer Store, Great Falls

NEVADA

I. C. Electronics, Las Vegas

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Video Biz of New Hampshire, Bedford
Foster Radio & Video Inc., Pelham
Home Video Shop, Seabrook
Video Station, South Merrimack

NEW JERSEY

Sound City Electronic, Bayonne
Software City, Bergenfield
Video Aids Inc., Bloomfield
Video Vision, Bridgeton
Mr. Melody, Caldwell
Gemini Enterprises, Cedar Knolls
Video Connection, Cherry Hill
Video Depot, Cherry Hill
O'Johnnie's, Clark
Accent On Video, Closter
Video Store, Elmwood Park
Video Trek, Fort Lee
Nu-Video, Lakewood
Video Junction, Leonia
DC Video Inc., Manasquan
Ippy's, Manasquan
Video Track, Marlboro
Video Studio, Metuchen
Babyland Gifts, Millburn
Video Access, North Bergen
Video Plus, Old Bridge
Video Fantasy, Palsadeset Park
Mr. Movie, Paramus
Record Record, Pompton Lake
Software City, Ridgeland
Video Dynamic, Ridgewood
Video Connection, Somerset
Opening Night Video, Wayne
Video Odyssey, Woodbridge

NEW MEXICO

Video Station, Alamogordo
Hastings Records, Farmington
Hastings Books & Records, Hobbs
Hastings Records, Las Cruces

NEW YORK

Video Shop, Albany
Video Station, Amherst
Video Emporium, Amsterdam
Videovision, Baldwin
Village Video, Briarcliff Manor
Videotronics, Bronx
Flatbush Video, Brooklyn
Kingsway Video, Brooklyn
Parkway Video & Electronics, Brooklyn
Tasco Video Fair, Brooklyn
Video Haven Ltd., Brooklyn
Video Store, Brooklyn
Video Connection, Cedarhurst
Manches Vantage Mart, Center Moriches
Video-Deo, Cooperstown
Video Emporium, Coram
Anytime Video, Deer Park
Video Connection, Delmar
Video Network Center, Flushing
Video Wizard Inc., Flushing
Video Station, Forest Hills
MSB Video, Franklin Square
Video Villa, Freeport
Video Etc., Great Neck
Huntington Video & Computer, Huntington Station
Video Enterprise, Kenmore
Castle Video Inc., Lindenhurst
Delman Television Co., Long Beach
LVR Video, Manhattan
Video Connection, Merrick
Caplain Video, New City
Computer Center Inc., New York
Leight Computers, New York
MAV Corp., New York
Video On First, New York
World of Video, New York
Software Supply Int'l Inc., Niagara Falls
Computer World, Orchard Park
Video Connection, Oyster Bay
Ozone Park Video, Ozone Park
Video Connection, Pearl River
Captain Video, Pomona
Commander Video, Port Chester
Ami Electronics Inc., Port Washington
Video Adventure, Pound Ridge
Prestige Video, Rego Park
STC, Richmond Hill
Rocky Point Video Palace, Rocky Point
Video Den, Scarsdale
Video Spectrum, Scarsdale
Video Entertainment, Sidney
Jenco Home Entertainment Center, Staten Island
Video Station, Suffern
Video Connection, Sunnyside
Video Connection, Tonawanda
Video To Go, Utica
Seigen Enterprises, Valley Stream
Silver Dollar Coin Co., Woodhaven

NORTH CAROLINA

Video Station, Asheville
Video Connection, Goldsboro
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Video Replay, Akron
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Video Biz of Canton, Canton
Video Plus Inc., Garfield Heights
Eric Martine, Maple Heights
American Video, North Olmsted
Cartridge Connection, Proctorville
Video Den, Willoughby

OKLAHOMA

Video Computer Inc., Lawton
Hastings Records, Oklahoma City
Kaleidoscope, Oklahoma City

PENNSYLVANIA

Video World, Coraopolis
Dalton Videoware, Dalton
Video Connection, Dresher
Program Store #7102, Greensburg
Video Store, Levittown
Hollywood At Home, Moosic
Video Connection, Narberth
Home Video Center Inc., Newtown Square
Delta Video, Philadelphia
Movies Unlimited, Philadelphia
Payco Electro, Philadelphia
Video Games Plus, Philadelphia
The Video Inn, Philadelphia
Games Unlimited, Pittsburgh
Program Store, Plymouth Meeting
Video Connection, Quakertown
Computers & Games, Reading

RHODE ISLAND

Video Connection, Johnston
Video City, Providence

SOUTH CAROLINA

Game Exchange, Greenwood
All That's Video, Spartanburg

TENNESSEE

Eye-Magic, Donelson
Take One Video Inc., Maryville

TEXAS

Hastings Books Records Tapes, Amarillo
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Hastings Records, Greenville
Video Station of Houston Inc., Houston
Hastings Records, Killean
Hastings Records, Lubbock
Hastings Records, Lufkin
Hastings Records, Mesquite
TV Games Limited, Plano
Hastings Records, Plano
Record Town, San Antonio
Software Store, San Antonio
Hastings Records, Victoria
Hastings Records, Waco
Record Town, Wichita Falls

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Kent Video & Computers, Kent
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Video Int'l Corp./DBA Video Hut, Seattle

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Total Eclipse, Mehomene Falls
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CANADA

J. D. S. Holdings Ltd., Coquitlam, British Columbia
Video Games Galore, Courtney, British Columbia
Future Shop, Vancouver, British Columbia
Home & Business Computer Center, Mississauga, Ontario
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National Video, Timmins, Ontario
World Wide Video, Toronto, Ontario

THE CHALLENGE OF ZORK

The Inside Story of the World's Most Popular Adventure Game Trilogy

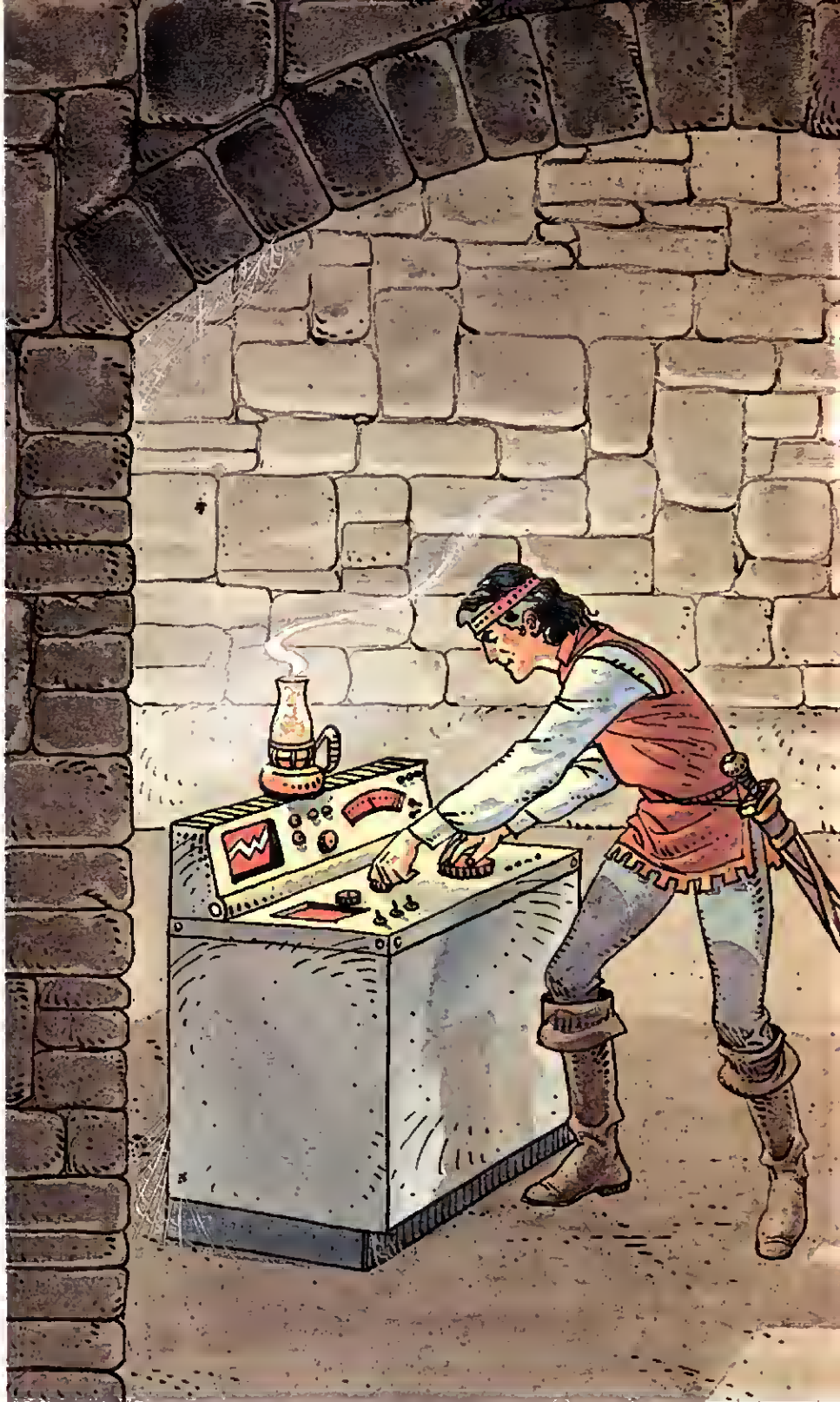
By TRACIE FORMAN

Time is rarely kind to computer games. Advances in hardware, software and programming science come so quickly that older games often pale in comparison with titles boasting the latest in graphics and sound. The current hit titles have a way of pushing last year's favorites into the background.

One of the few exceptions to the rule is Infocom's super-selling trilogy of text adventures, *Zork I*, *II* and *III*. To date, *Zork I* alone has sold about a quarter of a million copies, an incredible feat when one considers that sales of 100,000 mark a superhit computer game. Part of the games' success is due to their imagination-grIPPING



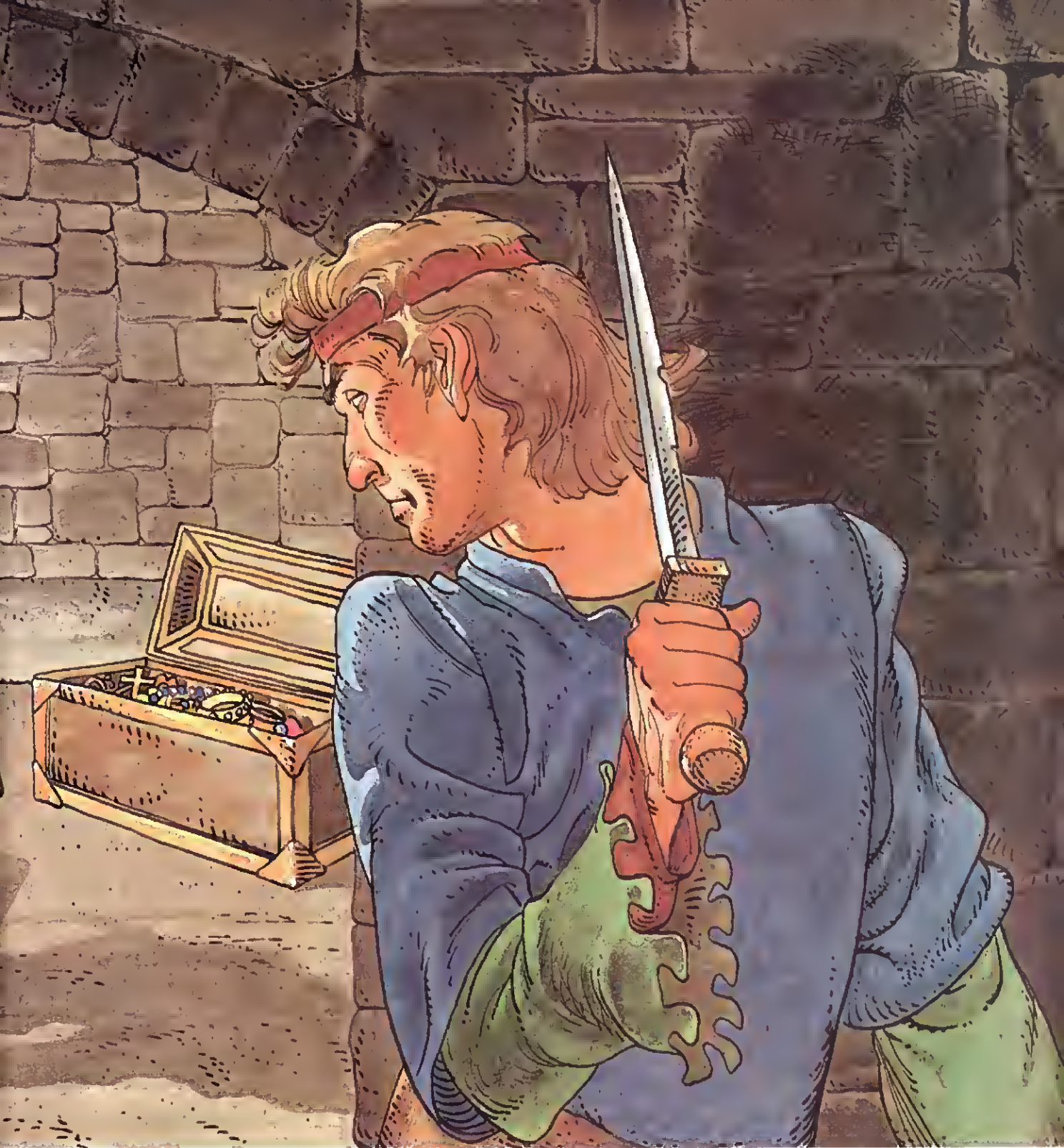
MIKE DORNBROOK



prose style and it certainly doesn't hurt that they can be played on the Apple II, IBM-PC, Atari computers, TI Professional computers, the TI 99/4A, the Osborne, TRS-80 Model III, NEC computers, and any systems operating on CP/M or MS DOS bases.

Zork is widely acknowledged as the definitive text adventure game. For those who've experienced a program of this type, a text adventure is played

using only words: The computer prints a description of the location, and the player responds by typing in a response. For example, in *Zork*, every time the adventurer enters an unlit area, the computer warns, "You have entered a dark place. It's likely that you will be eaten by a grue." If the player doesn't find a light source fast, he or she soon learns that computers don't lie!



Zork I is the introduction to the underground empire, challenging gamers to find and explore the subterranean ruins of an ancient civilization. The object is to plunder what treasures remain in the catacombs and live to tell the tale. But the player isn't the only explorer. A hungry-looking thief is after the same rich bounty, and he's a formidable enemy.

The second *Zork* takes players

even further into the bowels of the earth, there to discover the secrets of sorcery. Though the thief doesn't appear in this game — (can it be he knows his limits? — an evil wizard pops up randomly, casting spells to impede the player's progress. This is a more complicated game than the first, requiring adventurers to slay a dragon, placate a demon, and solve the mystery of the colored orbs, to name just a

few simple tasks needed to best the wizard in the end.

Zork III is the final chapter in the saga, and it's by far the most difficult to master. Experience points (the score) are few and far between, but it's worth all the trouble in the end when the gamer comes face-to-face with the ultimate foe — the Dungeon Master himself.

Like all Infocom games, *Zork I, II*

THE CHALLENGE OF

sentences and multiple commands ("Get the book, then walk north" instead of "Get book", "N", for example). Each game is complete in and of itself, and players don't have to master one adventure in order to start the next. All are fun to play individually. But taken as a trilogy, *Zork* is the most complete, satisfying adventure on the market today.

For those of you who've forgotten the Dark Ages of computer gaming (the late 1970's), the original Zork was

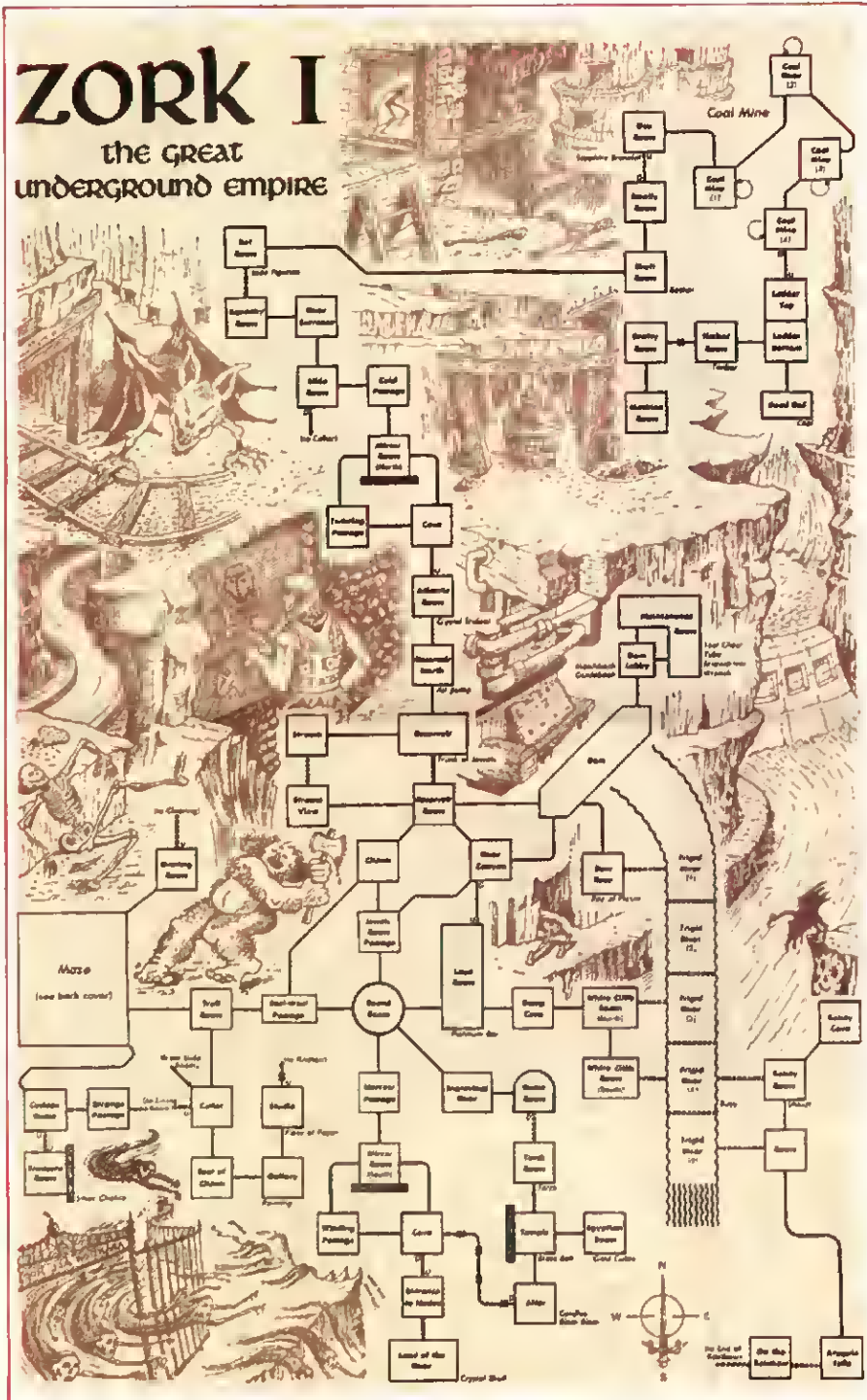
the brainchild of Joel Berez, Dave Lebling and Marc Blank, who met while doing their undergraduate work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Though Marc eventually graduated and moved to New York (where he attended the Albert Einstein College of Medicine), he devoted his weekends to commuting back to M.I.T., where the three toiled till the wee hours on the school's mainframe computer.

By mid-1978, the completed *Zork* adventure had become a legend among computer lovers "in the know", and student Zorkies dialed the M.I.T. mainframe from college terminals all over the country. Encouraged by the adventure's unbelievable popularity, Marc abandoned his internship, Joel became his own boss, and in 1979, Infocom was born.

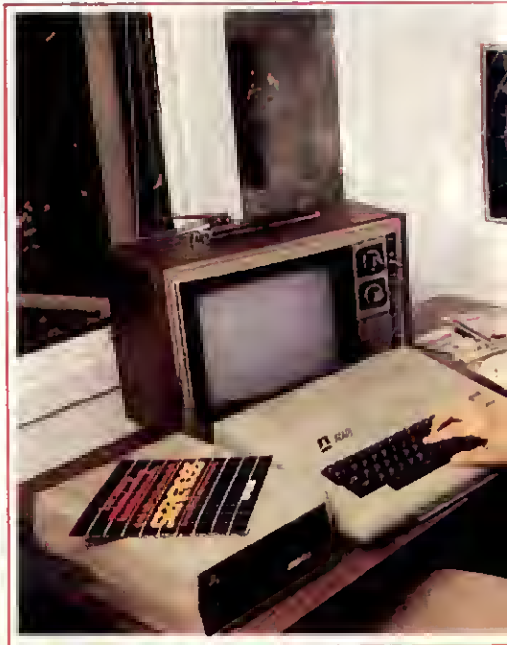
The first order was to scale *Zork* down to fit the memory limitations of a 48K home computer. While *Zork I* retains only about 60% of its original bulk, most of the best-loved brain-teasers remain intact — as does the original "Interlogic" programming.

To test the new, slimmed-down version, Marc, Dave and Joel enlisted the help of their former M.I.T. roommate, Mike Dornbrook. Despite the fact that Mike worked at M.I.T.'s Lab for Computer Science, he had never played any video or computer game. That made him a perfect guinea pig. (Mike has yet to drop a quarter in an arcade machine.)

Zork co-author Marc Blank enlisted the help of former roomie Mike Dornbrook to act as game's guinea pig.



Mike Dornbrook devised, as part of Infocom's support services, complete maps for Zork. The maps are now being revised.



As the original Infocom play-tester, Mike found himself fielding frantic letters and phone calls from harried Zork players who had come across insurmountable problems. Although he conscientiously answered each and every inquiry, it got a little boring to answer the same 30 or so questions again and again. Even establishing an Infocom hint service, which gave sage advice for \$2 a question, wasn't enough.

To compound Mike's dilemma, graduation time from M.I.T. rolled around, and it was time for him to move off to the University of Chicago's business administration program. Uneasy about abandoning Zork players completely, Mike tried to convince the others to hire a replacement for him. Impossible, he was told. After all, Infocom was a fledgling company, and there was already too much to do in the areas of production, distribution, and design for Zork's sequels. How could they hire a full-time staffer just to answer the mail?

Dornbrook countered with a compromise: If Infocom would let him borrow its trademark and establish the Zork User's Group, everyone would benefit. His original intention was to operate the business out of his Chicago dorm room, but it proved easier to wax his father out of retirement and set up an office in nearby Milwaukee.

The Zork User's Group had a humble beginning. The junior and senior Dornbrooks catered to a small but faithful following, providing almost the only support available to any computer adventurers. The company de-



THE ZORK SERIES (INFOCOM)

vised and sold complete maps for Zork I and its sequels, sent out new game announcements and insider's information, and answered an increasing volume of clue inquiries.

In 1982, after Infocom had begun enclosing information on the Zork Users' Group in each game package, the player questions finally grew to be too numerous to handle. Mike realized he needed a more efficient means of helping Zorkies in need.

After experimenting with sealed envelope kits, scrape-off clues made like instant lottery tickets, and a number of other ideas, Mike was stumped.

At a party, a friend suggested using invisible ink, which could be made visible by running a special developing pen over the hidden answers. Mike loved the idea and immediately tried to get started on it — only to find a major obstacle in his path: Where to find a company to produce the books? It turned out there are only two manufacturers in the U.S. capable of printing up "latent image process" books, a fact Mike discovered after exercising the same sort of perseverance that helps him solve adventure games. Luckily, one of the printers was nearby.


The hint booklets, called "Invisicues", are now available for all three Zork adventures. Their appearance caused a minor sensation and have contributed to the games' popularity. Gamers used to writing to companies, or simply shelving their adventure games when stumped, no longer had to tear their hair indefinitely. The answers were there for those who wanted to find them, but hidden well enough from those who didn't. Each book was packaged with a developing

marker, which the gamer passes over a particular section to answer specific questions printed in the booklet. To make things a little less obvious, dummy questions were liberally sprinkled in to keep players from learning about still-undiscovered areas just by reading all the questions.

The Invisicues concept took off like a shot, and late last year Mike Dornbrook joined the full-time staff of Infocom. Although officially, the Zork Users' Group has been dissolved, would-be Zorkies need not worry — Mike is overseeing Infocom's takeover of all Users' Group functions, expanding clue and map support to cover all of Infocom's releases.

As it stands now, each time a gamer buys an Infocom game, he or she finds a coupon inside. With the coupon, an Invisicue booklet and complete map can be bought for \$4.95 (what it costs Infocom). Without the piece of paper, though, the set goes for \$8.95, a move Infocom hopes will discourage software pirates.

With Infocom's money and resources behind the clue booklets, the packages and maps are being redesigned (in looks only — the content remains the same) to be consistent with the company's other high-quality accessories. A customer newsletter is also on the horizon, with its format derived from Mike Dornbrook's "New Zork Times". Posters, T-shirts, and other Zork-related souvenirs are also planned.

With their brain-testing challenge and beautifully-written descriptions, plus the availability of on-the-spot aid for frustrated adventurers, it's no wonder that Zorks I, II and III have become classics in their time. 



FURNITURE

Keep Your Expensive Gaming Systems Safe from Harm!

By JOYCE WORLEY AND TRACIE FORMAN

Thump! Crash! That's the sound a computer makes when it falls off a makeshift workstation. It can be one of the most expensive sounds a home computerist will ever hear. . . and one of the most unnecessary.

Although computer gamers seldom hesitate to spend money on hardware and software, too many don't ever give a thought about where they're going to put that home arcade, with its



GUSDORF'S COMPU-TABLE MODEL 1685

peripherals and library of programs. They hurry happily home from the local retailer, rip open the cartons, and only then hunt for a place to set up the stuff.

Unfortunately, many gamers end up putting their expensive equipment on the floor, with the wires and peripherals in a tangled mess beside the computer. Others precariously balance the delicate instruments on makeshift supports that wouldn't support a cat, much less provide a comfortable place to play. All too often,



COMPUTER WORK CENTER (WOOD-RACK)

this leads to a disaster. There's nothing sadder than watching a tower of electronics collapse because someone tripped over the dangling cords, or the family puppy attacked all the disks and cartridges.

In years past, there wasn't too much a home arcader could do but make the best of it. Once virtually all computer furniture was bought by offices — and looked it. The units were too large for the available space in most homes, were styled for a business setting, and they cost more than most individuals wanted to spend.

The computer boom has sparked a comparable expansion of the market for specialized furniture. The computer stations targetted at the growing legions of personal computer owners combine space efficiency with styling that's attractive enough to harmonize well with the rest of the home's furnishings and decor. And the prices have dropped bringing these sophisti-

cated stands within the reach of most pocketbooks.

Gusdorf, a company that specializes in sturdily-made electronics furniture, has a large variety of computer tables available in an assortment of styles and prices. The Compu-Table (Model 1685) is a best-bet for budget-conscious shoppers. It features an 18- by 31-½ in. desktop with a detachable, table-topper hutch that lets computerists adjust the monitor shelf to the most comfortable eye level. Priced at \$70, it's an excellent buy for a neophyte computer lover.

Atlantic Cabinet makes several full-sized computer desks, with special touches to fit every need. Hard-core gamers with lots of controllers and programs to store should check out Atlantic's 38-in. and 50-in.-wide computer tables. Both have two levels of computer space, plus set-in shelves that are roomy enough to accommodate lots of extra equipment. They're priced at \$165 and \$190, respectively.

Modular furniture from *Bush Industries* lets home computer owners expand their computer systems — gradually. Electro-gamers might want to start with the sleekly-styled, convenient roll-about table with bottom storage shelf (around \$80), or the full-sized desk (\$170) that has a lockable floppy-disk storage cabinet under-



DEERFIELD'S MODEL CT 1000

FOR GAMERS



VIDEO STORE 'N' PLAY (WOOD-RACK)

fan could possibly ever want.

The Computer Home Work Center from Wood-Rack Technologies, Ltd., is a compact, well-organized station that provides space for many of the things the computerist needs. It holds a 15-in. t.v. monitor, and houses the computer on a recessed shelf. Storage areas hold the disk drive and/or cassette, and a built-in cartridge holder holds up to 36 programs. It's available in walnut or oak woodgrain laminate, with casters to make it easy to move around the room. Retailing for \$159.95, it's a handsome piece of furniture that makes it easy to keep the workstation neat.

Deerfield offers a computer desk with double-shelved monitor stand,



VIDEO GAME CART MODEL G900 (BUSH)

neath the workspace to protect valuable software from pets. Both styles come in black matte vinyl or an attractive woodgrain finish, and they're packaged with easy-to-follow assembly instructions.

Next, a computerist might add one of Bush's desktop monitor stands (\$17.95), or the three-shelf deluxe hutch. It's as professional a set-up as any serious gamer could want. The hutch, which retails for \$100, has ample shelf space for disk drives, games, peripherals, joysticks, instruction books, and anything else a computer



TILTING TABLE TOPPER (ATLANTIC)

level workspace, and a set-in shelf beneath the desktop, in one all-wood package. It's especially deep — 28-in. — to accommodate people who like to spread out at the computer table. Constructed in simple, classic lines, it retails for \$175.

The Conway United Desk Company desk has a set-in shelf and a long desktop hutch that's wide enough to hold a monitor and a disk drive. Depending on the desk size and wood type, the computer station costs anywhere from \$138 to \$194.

If your home absolutely can't hold even one more piece of furniture, consider a computer hutch. Atlantic Cabinet's Tilting Table Tipper (Model TT22) retails for just \$37. It turns any flat area into a computer work/play

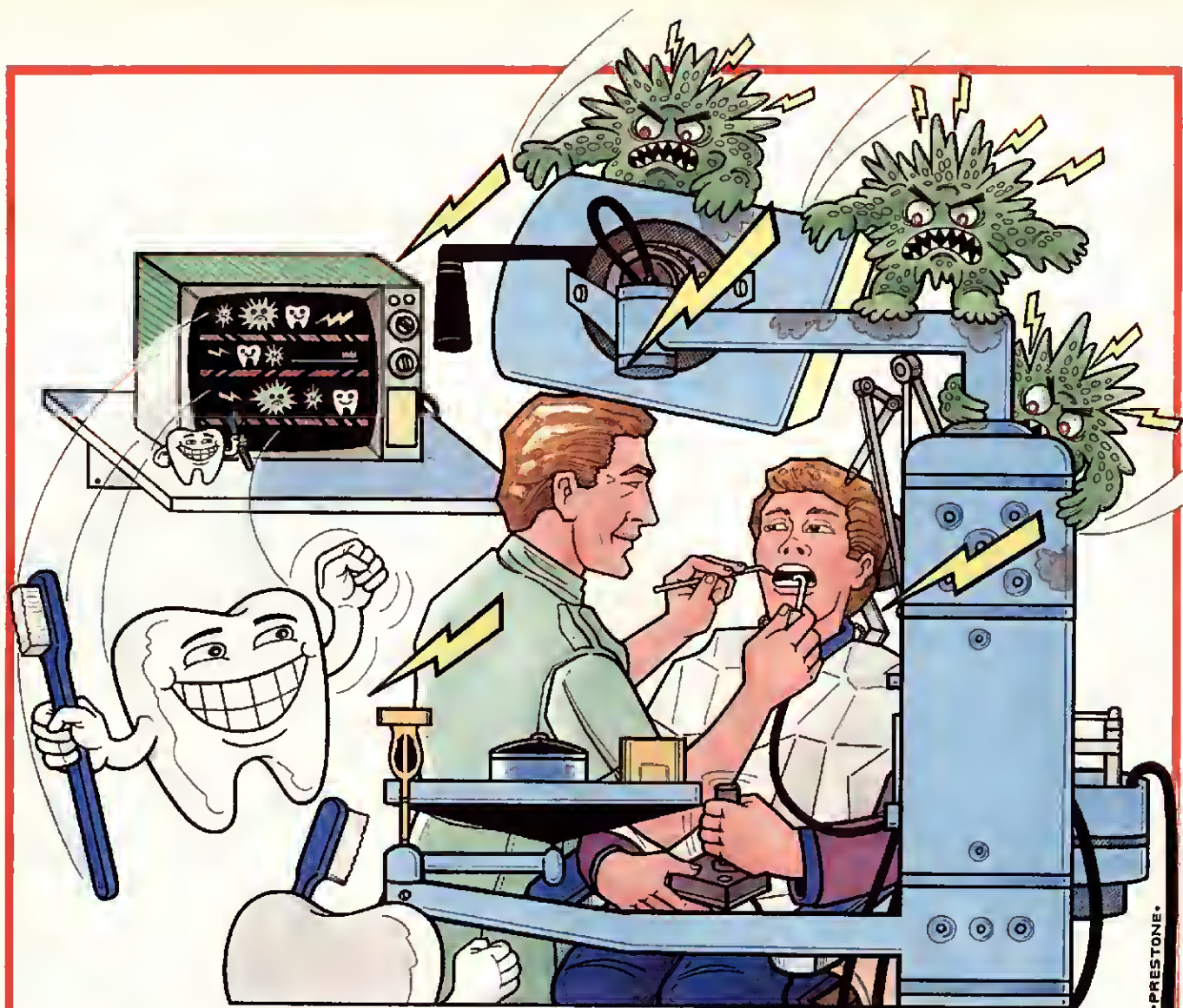
station. Just set your monitor on the hutch, tilt the shelf to suit your purposes, and you're ready to compute!

When choosing the computer furniture that's just right for your specific needs, be sure to measure the width, height and depth of the equipment you want to store. Remember that not all furniture is the same size, and you'll want to be sure that what you buy will hold the units securely, but with plenty of air space to allow ventilation. Remember to allow room for the cords, particularly if your computer plugs in at the side, and remember to measure your disk drive. A work station that doesn't hold the equipment you own is no bargain, no matter how pretty it looked in the store! Pay particular attention to the hutch or monitor stand you select. The t.v. or monitor is probably the heaviest part of your setup, so be certain that the stand is sized properly, and is sturdy enough to hold the weight.

When you get your new piece of furniture home, follow the assembly instructions to the letter. Most of these units can be put together with nothing but a Phillips screwdriver, a little muscle, and an hour's work. The result will be something that can bring blissful order out of the total chaos that typifies areas set aside for home gaming equipment.



COMPUTER WORKSTATION (CONWAY)



VIDEOGAME

DENTISTRY

By J. HERBERT SILVERMAN

Games Ease Fright and Pain

A New York dentist has just come up with a sparkling idea to polish the image of videogames and also add an unexpected dimension to the industry.

The general public hardly thinks of videogames as therapeutic, but all that may change dramatically as the result

of the innovative techniques Dr. Arthur Zuckerman has developed utilizing these games.

The good doctor, an associate professor of dentistry at New York University, specializing in cosmetic dentistry, is a pioneer in the use of video. He has linked a ColecoVision to a ceil-

ing-mounted television so it can function as a visual analgesic for the relief of pain.

"Dentists have known for a long time that they can diminish the use of anesthesia and make patients less apprehensive and more comfortable with 'distractive' techniques that work

GROW WITH US!

A special message
for electronic games retailers

Playing electronic games is now America's fastest-growing hobby. Here are some facts:

★ More than 10 million quarters are dropped into current coin-op champ "Pac-Man" every single day.

★ Nearly 5 million programmable videogame systems are hooked up to U.S. TVs already. Four million more are expected to be sold this year alone, along with 30 million game cartridges to play on them.

★ Sales of computer games are expected to exceed 1 million units by the end of the year.

ELECTRONIC GAMES, the first—and only—magazine devoted to this booming field, is growing as fast as the high-tech hobby it covers. Our premier issue was a newsstand phenomenon, with many dealers reporting sell-outs. Our second issue promises more of the same.

So if you sell videogame systems, hand-held games, or computer games, you should also be selling ELECTRONIC GAMES Magazine. As an EG retailer, you'll earn a good profit on every copy you sell (of course, all unsold copies are fully returnable). You'll also be providing your customers with that special "extra" that will bring them back to your store again and again.

To get all the information you need to join the ELECTRONIC GAMES retailer program, fill out and mail the coupon below. There's no obligation, so do it today. ELECTRONIC GAMES Magazine is growing fast... and we cordially invite you to grow with us.

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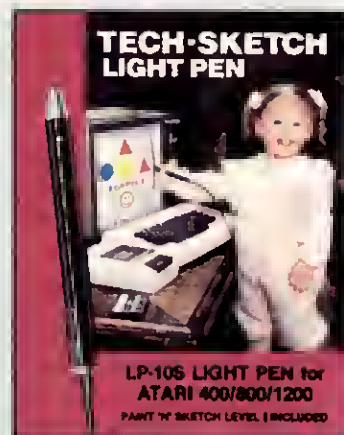
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3. NUMBER FUN FOR THE YOUNG Designed for children on a pre-school level to develop basic number counting skills through association.

4. MATH FUN FOR THE YOUNG — LEVEL I Designed to teach and develop math skills to pre-schoolers thru Grade 1. Teaches simple addition and counting skills on three levels.

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6. SHAPE AND COLOR RECOGNITION Helps children develop color, figure and word association skills. Permits children to pick and match colors and figures from a random group.

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COMMODORE VIC 20/64	14.95	16.95	34.95
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COMMODORE VIC 20/64	14.95	16.95	34.95

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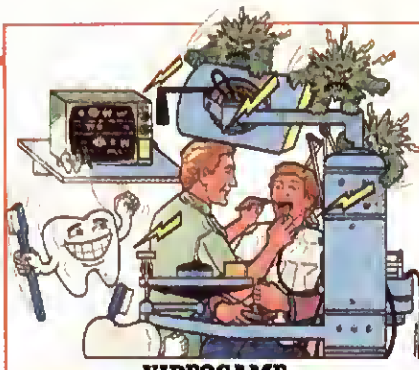
Dealers & Distributor inquiries invited. Commodore, Atari, Apple. Reg. TM's

on the senses," he explains.

"The most susceptible of the five senses, at this point, is the auditory. Originally, dentists used piped-in music and later, stereo equipment as a distraction, alleviating anxiety to some degree," said Dr. Zukerman.

Some years ago, Dr. Zukerman installed television in his offices. "We progressed to TV monitors, since basically, the patient normally stared at the ceiling while reclining in a dental chair, totally unaware of the world around him.

"What we've tried to do is modify sensorial input so that a patient can watch the screen and listen to its



VIDEOGAME DENTISTRY

sound through an earphone hook-up. To do this, we first attached a video recorder to the television monitor so we could show patients pre-recorded

tapes of their choice or ours," he says.

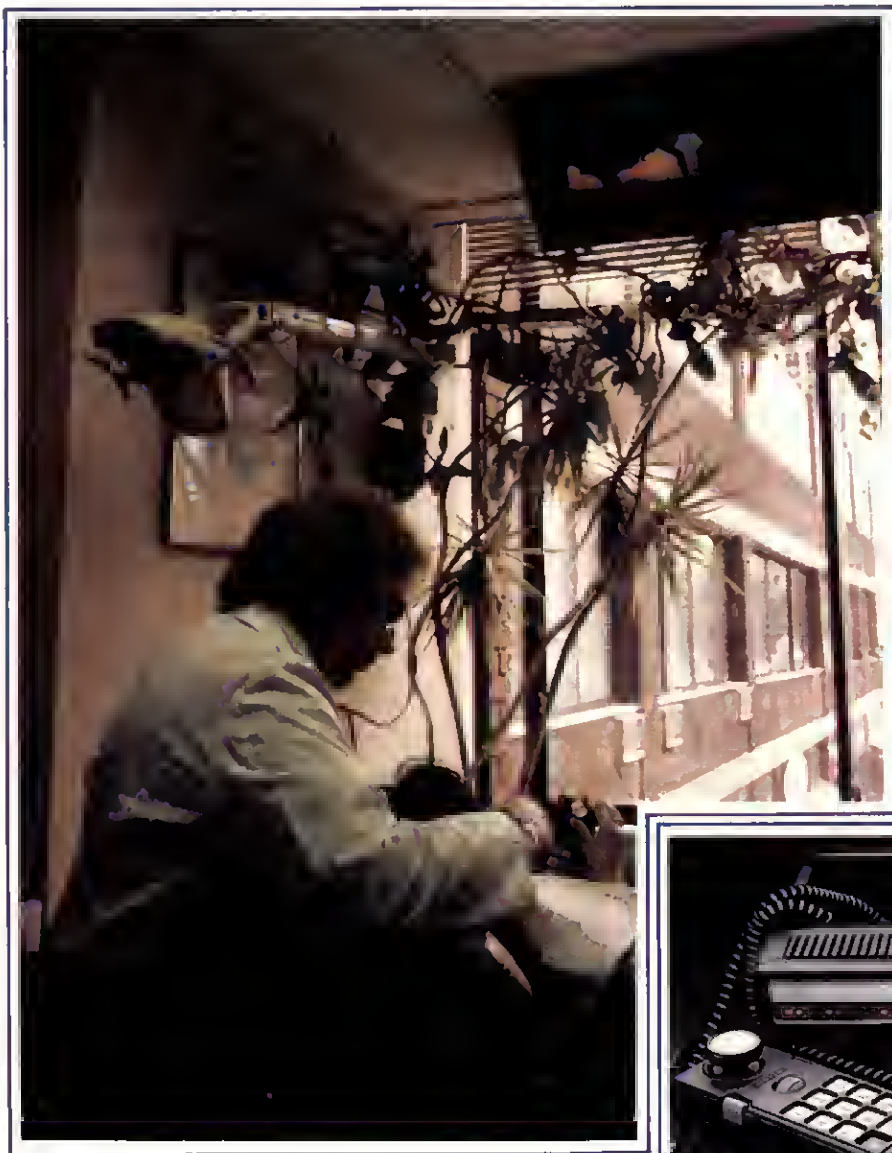
"We've gone one step further to get the patient more involved with visual and audio devices by adapting arcade games to even more extensive therapeutic use. Now, the patient is trying to compete to win. He or she is not just an outsider, visualizing, but someone involved in the game. By creating a greater form of distraction, we are able to obtain a greater relief from anxiety," Dr. Zukerman points out.

"This application of videogames in a clinical atmosphere is not only focused on children; it works well with adults, too. I've never met an adult who doesn't like to play some kind of game."

Use of electronic games can also help to break a vicious circle, he asserted. "Many children become frightened of a dental visit at an early age and carry this fear into adulthood. The child is apprehensive because he's 'tied' to a chair and is being treated in what, to the young patient, is an unpleasant or painful situation. The result is that you have a lot of adults afraid to go to a dentist.

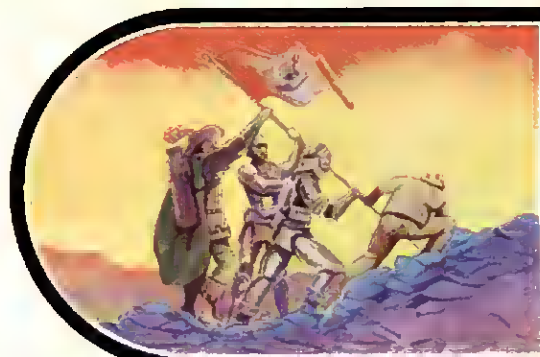
"What a wonderful thing it is now to have a dental visit become more of a pleasurable experience because of the use of video games and television. We will have a new generation growing up with sharply diminished apprehension about dental therapy, with the removal in large part of the mental trauma which affects so many people in our current generation," sums up Dr. Zukerman.

That's easy enough for Dr. Zukerman to say — his patients are zapping aliens. But what about the rest of us?



Dr. Arthur Zukerman's office looks like what you'd expect a dental office to look like, except for — the television screen overhead and the ColecoVision system on your lap.





PLAYERS GUIDE TO **COMPUTER WARGAMES**

COMPUTERS GO TO WAR

IT ALL STARTED WITH CARDBOARD

The Edison of war games was Charles Roberts, who introduced the first modern board strategy game with a military theme in 1958. His "Tactics II" — the original "Tactics" never reached commercial distribution — depicted a primarily land-oriented war between two neighboring hypothetical countries. Publishing under the now-familiar Avalon Hill Game Company banner, Robert almost immediately turned his attention toward producing simulations of actual battles. AH's "Gettysburg", "D-Day", "Stalingrad", "Battle of the Bulge" and "Afrika Korps" set the direction for contests played with cardboard counters on gridded maps and firmly established Avalon Hill as the world's leading manufacturer of such games.

The debut of the 16K personal computer gave computer-minded wargamers the chance to bring military strategy contests into the electronic age.

One of the first companies to take advantage of the

new medium was Strategic Simulations, Inc., more commonly known as SSI. Its success in the field is almost legendary.

War simulations are now quite plentiful for most of the microcomputers.

THE COMPUTER ADVANTAGE

Computer wargames are gaining popularity because they deal directly with the two main drawbacks of convention war boardgames. A mid-1970's survey conducted by Simulations Publications, now a subsidiary of TSR, Inc., disclosed the fact that a hefty percentage of war gamers play solitaire — even though virtually all conventional war games are designed for two or more participants. The difficulty of finding a reliable opponent, much less one of equivalent skill, is what makes many armchair generals court schizophrenia by taking command of both sides of the conflict. Most contemporary computer wargamers can be played against the machine, and quite a few titles even offer the option of adjusting the computer's skill level.

The other advantage computer games have over the

non-electronic variety is that they avoid the need for a multi-pound rulebook and painstaking record-keeping. Home arcaders who flinch at the sight of a digest-size four-page rules folder would go into cardiac arrest if they saw some of the mammoth tomes which serve as instruction books for the more grandiose boardgames.

Computers put all of a game's "wiring" — the nuts and bolts of the game — comfortably out of sight of the players. The program automatically takes care of the low-level mechanics and needed record-keeping and generally prompts the players as each phase of the game-turn comes up.

ARCADE COMBAT GAMES

Although this "Players Guide" deals only with computer strategy war games, there is another type of military-themed contest: the arcade combat game. These are a result of cross-fertilization between war games and arcade games. Their main distinguishing characteristic is that they emphasize hand-eye coordination and execution of tactics in "real time". A

complete magazine-within-a-magazine treatment of this type of computer game will appear in *Electronic Games* later this year.

VIVE LA FRANCE!

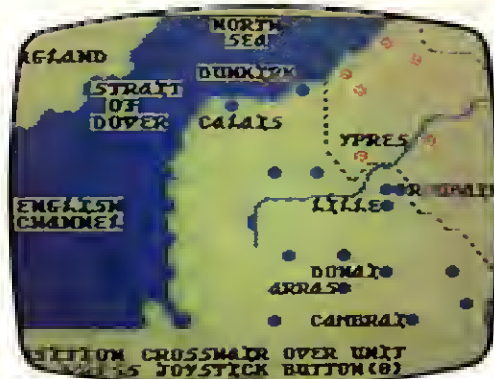
Napoleon's Campaigns, 1813 & 1815 (Strategic Simulations/Apple II/48K disk) is a corps-level simulation of the Corporal's campaigns of Leipzig and Waterloo.



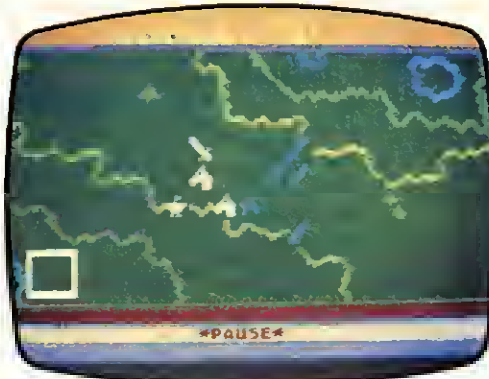
NAPOLEON'S CAMPAIGNS (SSI)

It's designed to play along lines that realistically reflect the military strategic doctrines of the Napoleonic Age, and it succeeds in giving amateur generals a good feel for this type of warfare.

Among other aspects of war science, *Napoleon's Campaigns* accents the crucial



DANGER IN PARIS (AVALON HILL)



LEGIONNAIRE (AVALON HILL)

importance of maintaining lines of communication. Would-be commanders will discover, the first time their front comes apart during an attempted flanking movement, that giving an order and getting it carried out properly are two different propositions. And that difference can quickly turn victory into defeat for the unwary.

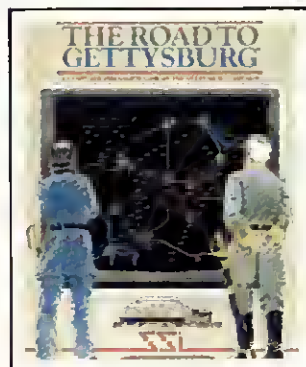
Paris in Danger (Avalon Hill/Atari computers/48K disk) includes both strategic and tactical levels of play in its simulation of Napoleon's clash with the invading allied armies of Austria, Prussia and Russia. It is playable head-to-head or a solitary gamer may take over for either Nap or rival commander Schwarzenberg. The action takes place on a fully scrolling map of France and surrounding countries, and the excellent on-screen graphics do much to make play even more enjoyable. Those who've been dissatisfied with the visuals in some of AH's earlier computer games will certainly find *Paris in Danger* (and several other recent titles like *Legionnaire*) much more impressive in this regard.

BROTHER AGAINST BROTHERS

Although it lags far behind World War II in popularity as a setting for computer war games, the American Civil War has provided fuel for a large number of game disks. There's something about the delicate balance among infantry, artillery and cavalry that is found in games on this period that's just about irresistible.

The most famous battle of

the 1861-1885 conflict reaches the video screen in **The Road to Gettysburg**



THE ROAD TO GETTYSBURG (SSI)

(Strategic Simulations/Apple II/48K disk). The electro-gamer has the choice of replacing either General Lee (South) or General Meade (North) in this fairly complex and sophisticated simulation.

The Battle of Shiloh (Strategic Simulations/Apple II, TRS-80/48K disk) lets gamers re-enact one of the most bitterly fought and controversial engagements of the whole war. Both sides claimed victory, but the Confederacy was ultimately doomed by its inability to wrest a decisive triumph from the Union Army

led by U.S. Grant.

The combat rules are the most interesting feature of the game. The program permits each commander to set a level of risk, from daring to cautious, and a specific tactic each time rival forces clash in the field.

A solo general can command either side against the computer in *Battle of Shiloh*, or the game can be enjoyed solo. The computer is also willing to play both armies against itself, which can provide some valuable lessons for raw recruits to computer war gaming.



THE BATTLE OF SHILOH (SSI)



THE STORY OF G.I. JOE

Computer software publishers have released more games about World War II than about any other military conflict. This exactly parallels the situation in the conventional wargaming world.

The events during and immediately after D-Day are the basis of **Battle for Normandy** (Strategic Simulations/Apple, TRS-80, Atari computers/48K disk). Units represent brigades, regiments and divisions in this simulation of the Allied landing and subsequent breakout for one or two players. Fighting through a series of two-day turns, the Allied commander must successfully land, sweep the defenders from the beaches and drive toward important objects like Cherbourg, Caen and St. Lo.

Easy-to-follow play-mechanics and decent graphics combine to give *Battle for Normandy* a very high rating even for those who aren't normally big war game fans. The 12 turns can be completed in a reasonable

length of time, and you can generally count on the outcome remaining in doubt right to the end.

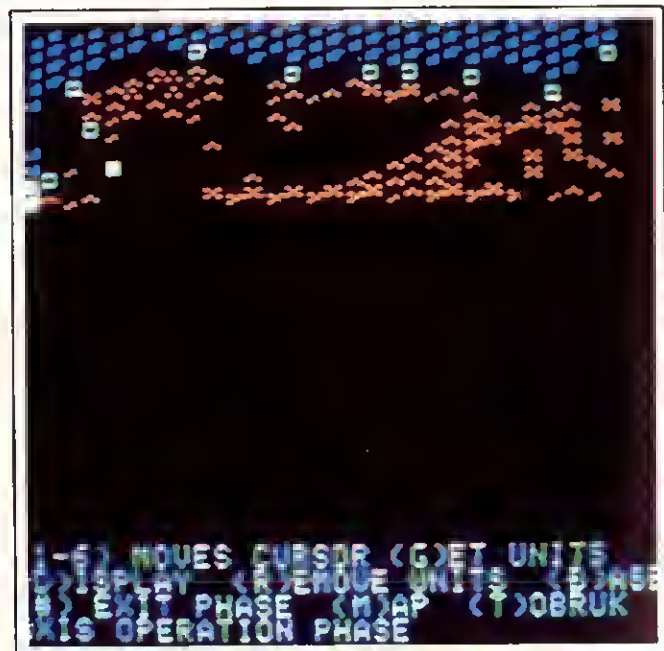
Eastern Front (Atari Program Exchange/Atari computers/32K disk) is Chris Crawford's superb recreation of the bloody battles between Germany and Russia during World War II. Superb pro-

gramming makes this one smooth as silk to play. The game even includes such niceties as allowing the commander to choose between detailed views of specific battle zones and an overall strategic view of the entire theater of operations.

Knights of the Desert (Strategic Simulations/Apple, TRS-80, Atari computers/48K disk) captures the lightning movement of battles con-

ducted across the endless sands of North Africa. This one- or two-player program confronts armchair generals with the same kinds of problems — supply, reinforcements, intelligence — that often made life tough for General Rommel and the assortment of Allied commanders who opposed the Desert Fox.

Operation Apocalypse (Strategic Simulations/Apple/



KNIGHTS OF THE DESERT (SSI)





COMPUTER AMBUSH (SSI)

48K disk) is also based on World War II. In this case, the disk offers four different battles from the Western Front, circa 1944-1945, to refight.

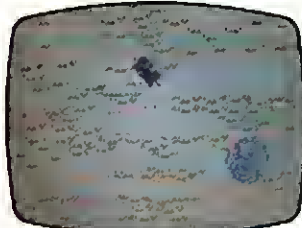
FIGHTING AT THE FRONT

Some games attempt to capture the essence of major battles in game-terms, but others strive to give the players a taste of small unit command during World War II. In these games, the player leaves the movements of armies and corps to high-echelon leaders and learns how to deploy squads of infantry, tanks and such for maximum effectiveness.

Computer Ambush (Strategic Simulations/Apple 48K disk) is finally available in a revamped second edition. Time had begun to catch up to the original program, but this intelligent revision brings this war gaming gem right back up to state of the art.

T.A.C. (Avalon Hill/Apple II/48K disk) lets the armchair militarist take charge of infantry squads and individual tank and anti-tank elements using

a selection of American, British, German and Russian equipment. There's also a choice of five different types of small unit action, ranging from a breakout to a rear-guard holding defense.



T.A.C. (AVALON HILL)

Operation Whirlwind (Broderbund/Atari computers/48K disk) moves so fast you'd almost think it was an arcade game at times. The human commander controls infantry, engineers, armor and artillery representing a typical regiment, and he or she must lead these forces across the hi-res mapboard to occupy the enemy town. Most of the commands are entered using the joystick, making this very comfortable to play, even for those who primarily enjoy arcade-action contests.



OPERATION WHIRLWIND (BRODERBUND)

DEATH



FIGHTING IN THE WILD BLUE

Air war enthusiasts who own a microcomputer are apt to be a lot happier than their boardgaming brethren. Conventional air combat games are fairly rare for some reason, but there's already a pretty good selection of computer titles, even eliminating the first-person flying simulators that are certainly closely allied to the war game genre.

THE PACIFIC WAR

Guadalcanal Campaign (Strategic Simulations/Apple II/48K disk) presents the famous battle from the Pacific Theatre of Operations in all its multi-faceted glory. This

head-to-head or solitaire contest, if played through to completion, consists of 294 turns which require at least 50 hours to complete. Fortunately, there's also an abridged campaign version lasting "only" 184 turns, plus four mini-games for faint-hearts who only want to spend three or four hours in front of the video display. Fortunately, all games can be saved to disk for resumption of play at a later date.

Monster games of this scope were all the rage among conventional war gamers a few years back. They passed out of favor again quickly, and the reasons aren't hard to guess. They take a long time to play and



PLAYERS GUIDE TO
**COMPUTER
WARGAMES**

RAINS FROM THE SKIES!



require the player to handle an incredible number of individual units. *Guadalcanal Campaign* is as gigantic as any multi-board conventional war game, but plenty of human engineering has gone into the control scheme to make the program remarkably simple to actually play.

Midway Campaign (Avallon Hill/Most computers/16-32K tape or 32-48K disk) puts the Japanese forces under the capable control of the machine, leaving the defense by the out-manned and out-gunned U.S. forces to the human commander. *Midway Campaign* lacks some of the audio-visual trimmings recent war game titles have conditioned players to expect, but its credentials as a strategy challenge are excellent.

THUNDER OVER BRITAIN

Though the War against Japan produced its full quota

of air aces, even momentous achievements like the Doolittle Raid take a backseat in the history books to the Battle of Britain. Germany's attempt to use its powerful air force to bring Great Britain to its knees failed because of the daring

and determination of a comparative handful of fighter pilots. **Fighter Command** (Strategic Simulations/Apple II/48K disk) is a highly sophisticated simulation of this epic air-war campaign. This strategic-level contest lets the



FIGHTER COMMAND (SSI)

player take command of England's overall air defense during the pivotal period when the outcome of the free world hung in the balance.

VICTORY AT SEA

ALL HANDS ON DECK!

Naval war games have always held a special place in

the hearts of computerists. There's a different feel in combat on the high seas than is found in infantry clashes or even dogfights in the sky. While computer software publishers are only starting to explore the potential of sea power disks, some good ones have already reached market. The emphasis is decidedly on modern warfare — the first great computer simulation of fighting sail still remains to be marketed — but there's a fairly decent selection of titles within that limitation.

SIGHTED SHIP, SANK SAME

Naval engagements involving the two most famous German naval vessels are offered by SSI. **Pursuit of the Graf**



PURSUIT OF THE GRAF SPEE (SSI)



Spee (Strategic Simulations/Apple/48K disk) covers the events in the South Atlantic involving the elusive ship. **Computer Bismarck** (Strategic Simulations/Apple II 48K disk) is set in the North Atlantic waters which the German pocket battleship menaced until sunk by elements of the British fleet. The latter is a somewhat older



COMPUTER BISMARCK (SSI)

game and is a bit harder than *Graf Spee*, which also comes with some slick-looking multi-color play aids.

Despite its title, **North Atlantic Convoy Raider** (Avalon Hill/Apple, Atari, TRS-80/disk) is also concerned with the events surrounding the sinking of the *Bismarck*. It specifically spotlights the 1941 convoy raid which culminated in the sinking of Germany's pride and joy.

Torpedo Fire (Strategic Simulations/Apple/48K disk) is based on one of the most exciting — and evenly matched — situations of World War II: the cat-and-mouse game between submarines and destroyer escorts. This is a particular good choice for those who prefer to control a sharply limited number of units.

North Atlantic 19B6 (Strategic Simulations/Apple/48K disk) is part of a series of games simulating near-future clashes between U.S./NATO forces and those of the Soviet bloc. This one depicts a potential land-sea-air engagement involving major elements of both sides.

WAR



PLAYERS GUIDE TO
**COMPUTER
WARGAMES**

IN OUTER SPACE

WAR KNOWS NO BOUNDS

Only a dreamy-eyed optimist would contend, based on currently available evidence, that armed conflict is going to cease once mankind permanently extends its sway beyond Earth's upper atmosphere. Although most rational people obviously hope that humanity — and any other intelligent species we meet in the vastness of the cosmos — will somehow learn to settle arguments without

bloodshed, it hasn't stopped those with a speculative turn-of-mind from wondering what the future of warfare might entail.

Obviously, no one really knows how battles will be fought in space. Still, it isn't necessary for a game to be truly predictive to be challenging and entertaining.

Most space war computer games visualize such conflicts as having elements of today's land, sea and air wars. Individual ships may dogfight like World War II planes, yet many science fiction game designers have postulated that great masses of such ships would be moved around something like a spacefaring Navy. Throw in infantry combat after invasion troops touch down and you've got quite a mix of possibilities.

MAINTAINING COSMIC BALANCE

Cosmic Balance and *Cosmic Balance II* (Strategic Simulations/Apple, Atari) are titles in the *Rapidfire* series of strategy/action games. *CB* and *CB II* simulate the broad



COSMIC BALANCE (SSI)



COSMIC BALANCE II (SSI)

spectrum of space warfare. With both of them next to your trusty computer, you can do everything from designing the individual spacecraft in your force to leading Earth's vast armada on a campaign of interstellar conquest.

THE GALAXY BECKONS...

Galaxy and *Andromeda Conquest* (Avalon Hill/Most computers) are not pure space war games in some re-

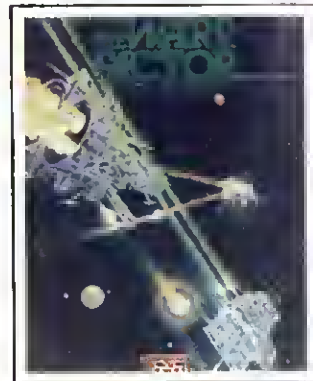


ANDROMEDA
CONQUEST (AVALON HILL)
GALAXY (AVALON HILL)

spects, but should prove of interest to those who enjoy military/diplomatic simulations. The idea in both is to conquer the universe system by system, exploiting new planets and using the fleet if necessary. *Andromeda Conquest* is on a somewhat vaster scale, making the warfare fairly abstract. *Galaxy*, which can be played by up to 20 computerists, has a more immediate "feel", and it is probably the better of the two disks.

TACTICAL SPACEWAR

The Warp Factor (Strategic Simulations/Apple) is the classic game of tactical space warfare. It permits the player(s) to conduct space battles with ships representing five diverse technologies. Those who like the "Star Trek" universe will be particularly excited about this one, since the ship types are at least loosely based on concepts introduced in the television series. G



THE WARP FACTOR (SSI)

PROBABLE PARADE

World War III Has Begun, and You Defend the U.S. from the War Room!

WAR ROOM

Probe 2000/ColecoVision

It used to be that, with few exceptions, strategy-oriented war simulations were virtually unavailable for videogame owners. Anyone with a yen for a real sit-down simulation had to buy a disk drive — or else forget the whole thing.

Not any more. The folks at N.A.P., which produced the best strategy videogames ever seen on the home screen with their *Odyssey Master Strategy Series* have changed the company name to Probe 2000 — and released its first ColecoVision cartridge, a nuclear-age thriller entitled **War Room**. Hold on to your joysticks, folks... this one's so hot it almost melts down as soon as you boot it up.

Played on a detailed representation of the United States map, the game puts players in the combat boots of a four-star general, defending our shores against nuclear attack. The game, which is reminiscent of the computer simulation in the movie "War Games", uses the full ColecoVision keypad and takes place in two different scenarios.

The first screen is straightforward enough: After blaring sirens announce impending attack, the player must position the anti-missile satellite over each invading bomb. (The amount of time left until detonation is indicated by the color of the bomb.) A quick press of the action button destroys the explosive mid-air and saves the defenseless target city.

Between each attack wave, players have to enter different cities to collect supplies. But be forewarned — Communist spies are everywhere, even in Boise! If a spy (indicated by a hammer-and-sickle) touches Uncle Sam, the city becomes a Communist base. The

only alternative is to destroy it (press the asterisk on the keypad) before it launches a multitude of quick-moving bombs.

But armies don't run on laser fuel alone. Cities that contribute to the cause have to be restocked to keep supplying. The more complex the finished product, the more materials are needed. For example, food producers can be raided without having to give anything back in return. But raw materials centers need food; machinery cities need food and raw materials; and laser weapons producers need food, raw materials, and machinery in equal doses to keep turning out goods.

War Room is purely a defensive game. There's no way to launch the U.S.'s weapons against the attacking country. The name of the game: protect and preserve — and *don't* run out of laser fuel!

War Room is one of the most addictive, exhilarating games available for the ColecoVision. It takes the concept

introduced in *Missile Command* a giant step farther, almost daring gamers to try "just one more" session. If this is any indication of what Probe 2000 is capable of, the company is destined for a long and prosperous career.

(Tracie Forman)



WAR ROOM (PROBE 2000)

SPIKE

GCE/Vectrex Arcade System

Not many gamers can turn a deaf ear to the screams of a damsel in distress, and **Spike** gives them a chance to rescue yet another frail female who's been kidnapped by a dastardly villain. In this case, it's the lovely star-faced Molly, stolen away by the dastardly Spud, and it's all up to our hero Spike to save the day and set things right.

Spike, like Molly, has a cheery five-pointed star for a head and a stick body. When Molly is shanghaied by the evil Spud, he pursues her right into the villain's hideaway.

But that's only half the magic of this game. GCE built voices for Spike and his lady right into the cartridge; no speech synthesizer or any other gadget is needed in order to hear the screams of the fair Molly when Spud takes her away. "Eek!" she screams. "Help, Spike." This plaintive wail



SPIKE (GCE)

prompts him to say, "Oh, no, Molly," as he rushes right through the door of Spud's hideout.

When Spike enters Spud's domain, the playfield is composed of three

moving catwalks connected by a movable ladder. **Spike** must maneuver his way over the catwalks, jumping from block to block, and climb up and down using the ladder, until he finds the key to Molly's cell. Then he's got to climb to the top of the triple catwalk, where he'll find the barred window to her prison. By leaping into the air, he releases his lady love. But Spud isn't that easily deterred, and in the next round he again captures Molly and takes her back to his land.

The first level of play is very easy, though starting with the second level, things get a little more complicated. Spud has a crew of henchmen to help him bedevil Spike. Bouncers, who look for the world like little t.v. sets on spindly legs, jump around the catwalks and one touch dooms Spike. Starting with the third level, birds fly through the playfield. They soar above the catwalks, then swoop down a level to attack our hero.



PROGRAMMABLE PARADE

But the clever Spike isn't entirely without defenses. He's got talented feet and can kick left and right to demolish these dastardly opponents.

Spike is allowed four defeats in each game. He loses a life anytime one of the bouncers or birds touch him, or if he falls off a catwalk, or falls off the edge of the screen as the catwalk scrolls along. In higher levels of the game, the catwalks change direction each time he manages to dispatch one of his enemies, and unwary gamers have to take care not to get caught on the edge of a platform when this happens or they might be swept right over the side.

Starting with the second round of play, Spike can get some help by catching Molly's hair ribbon. Her bow falls from the cell window, and if Spike catches it, all the villains on screen freeze in their tracks for a few moments. Now's Spike's chance to dash toward Molly's cell without having to pause and do battle with the wildlife.

Gamers score points for kicking the bouncers and birds, for collecting the key, and for freeing Molly from her cell. To win highest scores, don't get distracted into battling the baddies, since they aren't worth nearly as much as releasing the heroine.

As with all vector-scan games, the playfield and characters are made of bright line drawings that show the Vectrex system to good advantage. The game comes with a screen overlay that puts a little color in the action, and there are variations for one or two players.

(Joyce Worley)

SAFECRACKER

Imagic/Intellivision

Intellivisionaries with a yen for adventure will find plenty to sink their teeth into with **Safecracker**, Imagic's two-screen spy thriller. Designer Marvin Mednick should feel awfully proud of his creation, which combines gorgeous graphics resolution and an interesting play-mechanic to make a game which is about as good as

possible on the Intellivision system.

Players assume the role of a spy driving a blue limo through the scenic city streets in search of various items found in embassy safes. It's crucial to master control of the car, and subtle nuances like corner-turning and braking take practice to perfect. The color of the border indicates the direction players should drive in: red means go northwest, yellow northeast, etc. Care must be taken to avoid a crash with cars or curbs, and also to avoid the spray of gunfire from the Secret Police's black limousines. Shooting white cars (innocent citizens) to prevent a crash deducts 200 points from the score, plus it brings the cops

around fast. Secret Police cars can be eliminated by a well-placed shot.

Embassies are placed randomly throughout the beautifully-detailed city. These hotbeds of international intrigue are denoted by a diamond marking. The gamer must be directly in front of the building in order to enter. Then, it's time to crack the safe.

There are two ways to enter a safe. Players can either pick the lock or blow it open with a well-placed dynamite charge. Upon entering the embassy, the screen indicates how many combinations there are to pick and how much time is left to do the dirty work (30 seconds is the maximum). To cycle through the combination quickly, use the top buttons. When you hit the right number, the lock turns red and a beep sounds.

Inside the safe are a number of different treasures, plus one number. After every successful break-in, players have to find their way back to the hideout (a black building with white windows and a red roof) to deposit the





SAFECRACKER (IMAGIC)

bounty. After opening four different safes — and collecting the four numbers — it's on to the Treasury Safe, the Big One itself. The four numbers comprise the safe's combination, and players who open it are rewarded with 500 points, a bonus chance, and five gold bars worth a grand total of 1000 points. Then it's on to a new, harder version.

With all the fun it has to offer, *Safecracker* is a sure bet to steal Intellivisionaries' hearts.

(Brian Scott)

CRASH DIVE

20th Century Fox/Atari 2600

How would you like to commandeer an amphibious vehicle beneath the sea and above the clouds? Well hold onto your seats because here comes *Crash Dive*, the newest release for 2600 owners from 20th Century Fox. The name may be a bit misleading (I thought I had picked up a new version of Atari's classic *Sky Diver*!), but I can tell you that this is not the case.

The gamer takes command of a flying sub (reminiscent of the old "Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea" show) which is on a treasure hunt. The screen is divided into five sections, each containing a different adversary, including birds, helicopters, and jets (random) in the sky, a gun boat or a sub (necessary for refueling; gamers must pass the sub over it) on top of the water, sting rays, sharks, angler fish, squid, lobsters, sea monsters (which are indestructible), and mines (same case).

Players control the sub as follows: up-rise, down-descend, left-slow,

right-fast, neutral-medium speed. Hit the firing button and a missile is released. One should note that traveling through the air is fastest, water is half the air speed, and the sea floor restricts horizontal movement.

Don't think that the sub is indestructible and only vulnerable to fuel loss. The game starts out with three subs in reserve, but home arcaders can gain an extra one if they succeed in nabbing six prizes.

Saving the best for last, not everything in the game is dangerous — there's a reason for the effort: the prizes! Six of them are available

(sword, wine bottle, sunken boat, crown, chalice, pot of gold and a key), if the player's good enough.

Some pointers for the game are: take a sky-to-sea floor route when eliminating obstacles. The sky-based ones have audible signals which tell you they're coming (can only be heard in the sky) and the seaview (top of the water) which can be heard anywhere on screen. Disable any foe that can fire on you before you do anything else because they're equipped with both missiles and depth charges.

The graphics of this game are vivid, colorful, and detailed; there's no problem in identifying anything on screen. In terms of the 2600, this is a noteworthy job!

So if you're interested, pick *Crash Dive* up and have a ball!

(Brian Scott)

FATHOM

Imagic/Intellivision

This wonderfully graphic work of art, designed by Rob Fulop (creator of the immortal *Demon Attack*) takes players beneath the depths of the ocean and sends them soaring high in the air in a quest to rescue a beautiful mermaid, not once, but seven times.

At the start of the game, the player assumes the role of a porpoise. The object of this screen is to touch as many seahorses as possible, without brushing up against octopi and seaweed beds. When all the seahorses on-screen have been touched, a star-



CRASH DIVE (FOX)

PROGRAMMABLE PARADE

fish may appear. Each starfish earns the gamer one piece of the sought-after trident, but these undersea creatures are hard to come by.

Touching a certain number of sea-horses makes the bird symbol appear. After grabbing the prize, the player transmorphs into a high-flying seagull,



FATHOM (IMAGIC)

pressing the joystick button once for each flap of the bird's wings.

While a bird, care must be taken not to fly into the path of an erupting volcano, while touching pink clouds and avoiding black birds. Players have to touch all the clouds in a section to gain a star (which may not be granted anyway), and this must be accomplished before the clouds turn gray. Touching enough clouds grants a fish symbol, which enables the gamer to attempt Neptina's rescue — if he or she has collected all three pieces of the trident.

Points are subtracted each time the gamer crashes into anything dangerous. Each time the mermaid is saved, the Gods extend the player's realms by one scene, which makes for a lot of swimming and flying!

(Brian Scott)

NIGHTMARE

Sanchez/Atari 2600

It's all very tempting to begin a review such as this, dealing with a somewhat sub-mediocre game, saying that the title says it all. And while it's in-

arguably true that there are some nightmarish aspects to this game, especially in the programming for controller response, it isn't a total write-off.

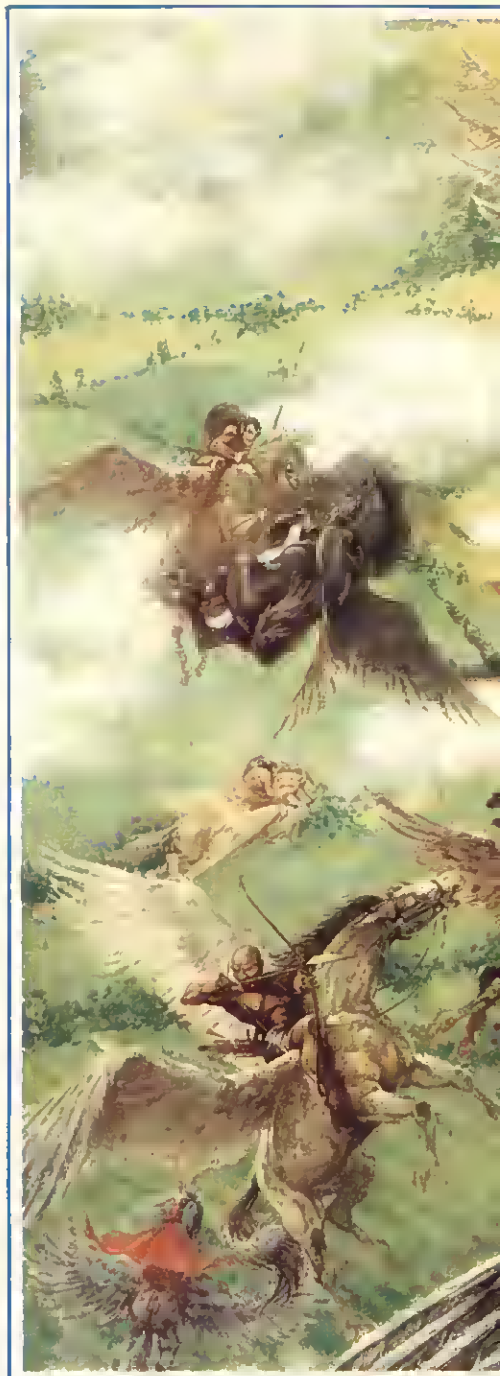
Nightmare begins with a lullaby and turns nasty the instant you touch that reset switch. A child is dreaming, and you control him as he moves about the playfield floor, being menaced by a deadly serpent whose touch will rattle you.

The object is to reach an escape helicopter, hovering at the top of the screen, by climbing a series of "magic" ropes, leaping through the air, and either confronting or avoiding a legion of challenges.

The game has six speeds and nine screens, but only three scenarios. After the third rack is mastered, the eight enemy objects are rerun, this time doubled in number, then tripled.

The trio of scenarios are the Birds, the Devilfaces and the Balloons. On the first level, and levels four and seven as well, the screen contains only birds, which must be avoided, as contact with them will knock the child off whichever magic rope he's scaling. Scenario two, the Devilfaces, is more interesting. Floating demon-like countenances meander in straight horizontal parade fashion back and forth across the screen, but this time our young hero is armed! The plucky lad has a magical whacking stick, and maneuvering the joystick to the left or right turns a Devilface into a Bird — but remember, Birds will knock you off your perch, so get out's the way once you've connected with a Devilface.

Ultimately, there are the Balloons. The child leaps into the air, grabs the end of a balloon, and gently guide it to earth, where it transforms into a Devilface, which must then be smacked upside the head for Bird-conversion. And you've got to deal with all the Devilfaces before you can board the chopper and sail on to the next, more horrible nightmare. The speed with which Balloons and Devilfaces are dispatched determines the number of bonus points earned each round. All rounds



are run with a strict time limit as well.

The graphics are pretty flat here, but the real problem with a potentially amusing game is its play quality, which is decidedly poor. Even pointing the joystick directly in the three o'clock position is no guarantee, for example, that the child will leap to the right, and not the left, when a leap is launched via the action button. Having your on-screen surrogate do exactly the opposite of what he's instructed may be an interesting comment on the obstinacy of children, but generally makes for frustrating play.

There are just too many 2600-compatible games in the marketplace



that have excellent graphics and well-programmed action to really consider a title as shaky in those departments as *Nightmare*.

A nightmare of a game? Hardly. More like a restless night's sleep.
(Bill Kunkel)

JOUST

Atari/Atari 2600

What has four legs and flies? Two home arcaders fighting it out playing *Joust*, Atari's incredible VCS translation of the popular arcade game. Everything gamers loved in the coin-op has survived intact even the option of jousting against a second player.

The play-mechanic is sure to sound familiar to many: Riding astride a giant bird of war, the gamer takes on all

comers in a flying free-for-all. (To fly, gamers must flap their wings by pressing the joystick button for each flap.) When two knights meet, the higher flier wins the match. Each time an enemy knight is destroyed, his bird drops an egg. Catch it quickly or it reincarnates into a new opponent, and don't forget to keep an eye out for the vicious, predatory pterodactyl (in this version, it more closely resembles a dragon).

The VCS adaptation of *Joust* is as good as it could possibly be. Atari has captured the feel of the original game, and much of its original look as well. This version has fewer on-screen



JOUST (ATARI)

PROGRAMMABLE PARADE

opponents than the coin-op version, and the knights are displayed in colorful silhouettes. But aside from these minor differences, gamers who liked Williams' *Joust* are sure to have a field day with the VCS translation, especially while duking it out against their friends.

(Tracie Forman)

CENTIPEDE

Atari/Atari 5200

What can one say about Atari's *Centipede* that hasn't already been said?

Relatively little — most gamers are already intimately familiar with this Atari-produced variant on the *Space Invaders* play-mechanic, substituting bugs for Bug-Eyed Monsters from Bette Midler. This version, however, is something to shout about nonetheless.

Since its introduction, the 5200 has dwelled in a shadow, thought of as a slightly retooled Atari computer in a sleek black plastic disguise. With its latest releases — including several

software packages from independent producers — the 5200 has come into its own. The 5200 version of *Centipede* offers the best home play this side of an arcade, with the availability of the new trackball controller only supplementing the superior sound and graphics.

Centipede broke new videogame ground by offering players a measure of vertical movement of the gamer-controlled cannon, in addition to the total horizontal access standard in invasion contests. This intriguing element made the game especially viable for trackball play, with gamers zipping their cannon in everything from straight lines to looping curves, all the while sitting on the action button as the gun barked in continuous rapid fire. The rapid fire element made the ability to aim-and-move in a single, fluid motion all the more vital.

What the 5200 version of the coin-op classic offers is quite simple: everything. The graphics are not only equal, but slightly superior, to the computer version's. The audio accompaniment

is full-bodied, and the magnificent trackball eliminates the 5200's Achilles' heel: its poor, non-centering joystick controller.

The titular centipede is constructed of rounded, nicely-colored body segments which slither downscreen through the mushroom-stocked corridors in fluid, serpentine fashion, while a collection of theme-song oriented audio-clues signal the appearance of every guest star, from fleas to scorpions. The supporting cast of guest insects is represented, as well, from the familiar, bobbing spider to the poisoned centipede-heads, plunging downscreen and spawning mushrooms in its wake.

Atari's *Centipede* for the 5200 represents a high-water mark in the home translation of arcade action games. Unlike most transplanted shoot-outs employing such a wide variety of characters, props and on-screen action, nothing is short-changed in the journey from arcade to home TV.

(Bill Kunkel)

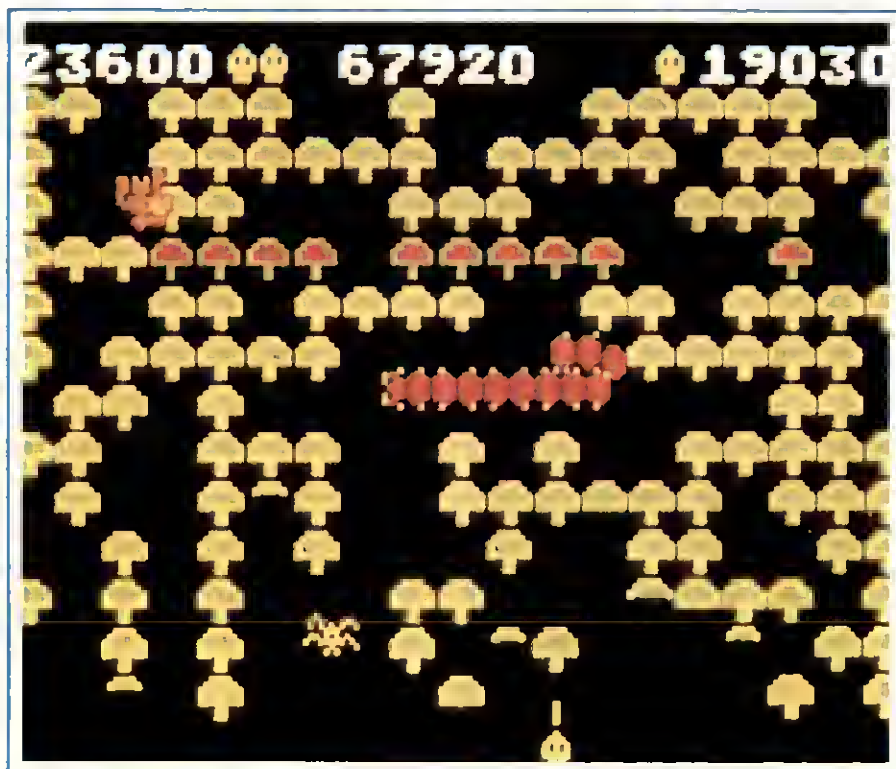
QIX

Atari/Atari 5200

Although it didn't have the legs necessary to make it a super-successful coin-op, Taito's *Qix* nonetheless represents everything that a good arcade game should be. It offers intriguing, high-tech graphics, interesting audio accompaniment and just the proper amount of strategic viability.

In short, *Qix* is exactly the sort of game that just aches for home translation, where players can learn the type of tactics and skill necessary to master it, without the annoying need to continue dropping tokens into a coin-op's insatiable maw. This was not lost on Atari, obviously, when they scooped up the home programmable and computer rights to this cult classic.

Qix was the first major "box-building" contest, but unlike the bulk of games in this genre (*Amidar*, *Pepper II*, etc.), the play-mechanic was totally free-form. Players must build squares and rectangles, at two speeds, scoring points for each portion of the playfield pre-empted by their two-dimensional geometric figures. Meanwhile, a series of closely-spaced parallel lines rove freely over the screen, destroying any unfinished boxes it makes contact with. The object, on the early screens, consists of either fast or slow-drawing (slow-draw being worth more points) enough boxes to fill in the pre-determined percentage of the playfield without being obliterated by the wan-



CENTIPEDE (ATARI)

dering, killer "styx", or the deadly "fuses". Fuses begin to attack the player's boxes-in-progress along its own perimeter the instant the "qix" or drawing-point stops moving while in the process of constructing a box. Or: He who hesitates is lost. Once a box is completed it fills up in either blue (fast drawn) or orange (slow-drawn), and the point value is immediately totalled.

At the higher levels, however, the game is turned inside out by the appearance of a second set of styx. At this point the player has one of two options. Either the gamer continues playing as before, attempting to elude the twin killers, or works at drawing his lines so as to split the pair by dividing the playfield. Each time the styx are split, the point value is numerically increased by a single digit exponent —



QIX (ATARI)

doubled, then tripled, then quadrupled, etc.

Atari's Qix for the 5200 is a magnificent coin-op translation, offering a perfectly stylized duplication of the original graphics, right down to the lettering. Unlike its awkward computer version, point totals are counted with high speed precision and boxes, once constructed, are colored in instantaneously.

The only drawback to this otherwise letter-perfect contest has nothing to do with the software, but rather with the 5200's own flawed hardware. As anyone who has ever dabbled in Pac-Man on the 5200 can attest, these flacid controllers were not made for horizontal/vertical axis movement. Once the spring on the joystick shaft begins to loosen, the control over the qix begins to fray.

As more and more quality software is made available for this fascinating game system, the prospect of compatible gourmet-quality joysticks becomes ever more viable. Until then, 5200 owners will have to be satisfied with a version of Qix that is merely magnificent.

(Bill Kunkel)

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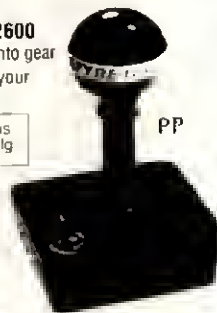
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By BILL KUNKEL

Having Fun with the Force

Arcade fads come and go. Their transitory nature is the only sure thing in the wonderful world of coin-ops. Just a few months ago it looked as if the "cute" games would be supplanting other genres on the arcade floors. Then, suddenly, fantasy and science fiction made major comebacks as favored themes.

Dragon's Lair showed arcade owners that fantasy was a viable format for electronic gaming while technological state-of-the-art also smiled brightly on its oldest child — science fiction contests.

Since these wonderful boxes of audio-visual pyrotechnics seem so intrinsically futuristic, sf games have always been the major benefactor of advances in hardware design. When arcaders step up to a shiny new coin-op, the initial expectation — born of equal parts logic and conditioning — seems to be that they will become surrogate spacemen.

STAR WARS

Atari

Little more than a year ago, vector graphics seemed ready to expel raster-scan format coin-ops from arcades across the world. The crisp, line graphics were superior to anything the rasters could summon up, and the technology's high-tech sheen was perfect for the sf games that then dominated the scene.

But, between improvements in raster technology and the growing popu-

larity of "cute" coin-ops (singularly unsuited to vector graphics with its "cold" look), raster came back so strongly that vector games began to look like a short-lived trend to those

arcaders who follow fashion.

Surprise! Quite suddenly, everything has gone back into perspective with the advent of the finest vector graphics coin-op yet produced, Atari's *Star Wars*.

The Force was certainly with Atari when they designed this marvelous electronic simulation of an assault on the fearsome Death Star, especially in sit-down form. As the gamer takes his seat within the X-Wing recreation, gripping the unusual steering-and-fire controls, a flood of movie-induced images are recreated with uncanny accuracy.

The rules of this outer space shoot-out are quite basic. In each contest, the player is protected by a series of seven invisible shields. The simulation-bound space jockey must then move through a sequence of increasingly difficult challenges in both inner and outer space, battling tie-fighters and fireballs amid the stars before coming upon a Death Star.

Once within the mammoth Imperial battle station, the X-Wing must be navigated through a series of trenches. Each trench is more challenging than the one before it, with everything from anti-aircraft batteries to weirdly-spaced obstacles stretching across the horizontal length of the narrow man-made canyon.

When a Death Star has finally been traversed and conquered, the player must exit via the exhaust port, where another deadly space battle and an even more terrifying Death Star await.



STAR WARS (ATARI)

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80 Electronic Games



Alternatively, the gamer will encounter laser towers within the confines of the more difficult battle stations. Here the young arcade warrior must eliminate the laser batteries atop the towers and the ground-based ammunition dumps.

What makes *Star Wars* so impressive, however, is not the utilitarian play-mechanic but the dizzying optical and audio effects. Accompanying this outer space dogfight is a combination of John Williams' masterful score and

down format, the rear-mounted speakers blend music, sound and fury in a magical mix of music and ship-to-ship chatter.

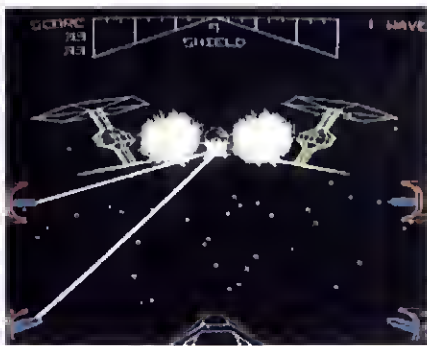
The steering-wheel styled controller (shaped rather like a tie-fighter itself) allows pilots to dip, climb and arc almost a full 180 degrees. The re-creation of flight through space is made all the more uncanny by the vertigo-inducing angles at which the simulation can travel.

Each time a surrogate Skywalker blows away a Death Star, he or she is rewarded with an awesome bit of video-feedback — a long-distance view of the gargantuan battle station exploding in three stages.

No coin-op has ever utilized vector graphics more effectively, balancing



Although laser-disc games have caught the public's eyes, Atari's newest vector graphics game, *Star Wars*, is pulling in more than its share of quarters. Note the clean crisp look of the familiar movie-based scenarios.



familiar dialogue from the first of the three George Lucas films.

"Use the Force, Luke!" urges Obi-Wan Kenobi as a new set of Death Star-studded obstacles appears on-screen, while a familiar cry of "I'm going in!" is heard each time your X-Wing drops toward a looming Death Star. Particularly effective in the sit-

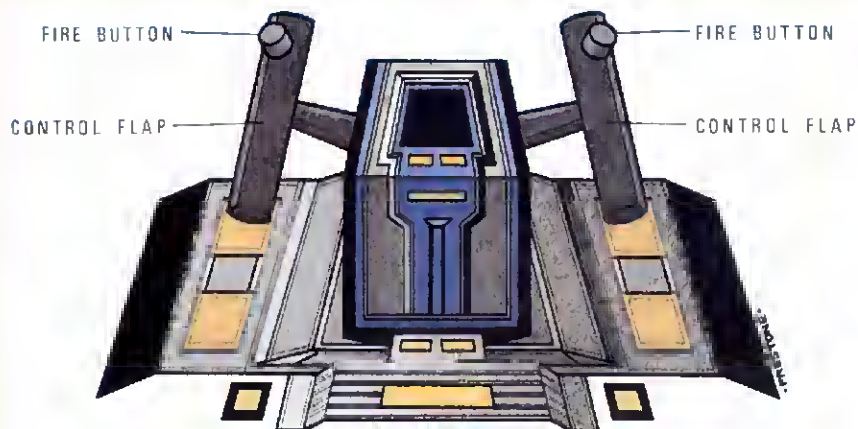
the stark quality of deep space combat with the web-like complexity of war within an asteroid-sized battlestar.

Star Wars proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that vector graphics has a definite place in today's sophisticated high-tech arcade. Like laser-discs and raster scan graphics, there are some games that seem to have

been made for this type of visual presentation.

So check this one out, have fun, and

(*ahem*) "May the Force be with you!" Unless, of course, your first name happens to be Darth.



STAR WARS HOW IT PLAYS:

The tie-fighter shaped steering wheel can be maneuvered to climb, descend, and turn right or left. Pull toward you to streak upward, push away to drop in altitude. Turning the controller to the left or right arcs the

perspective visible on the playfield.

Firing buttons are built into the flap-like appendages used for steering. The player's guns are visible on-screen, with an on-screen cursor used for precision targeting.

CRYSTAL CASTLES

Atari

Remember Yogi Bear? Yeah, that's right, the big, amiable bruin with the tie and fedora who wandered the environs of Jellystone Park. He has a little cohort, much less audacious and somewhat craven, but easily swayed by his blustering, hi-flying buddy. If you're still with us, it may likewise be remembered how utterly Yogi disdained what was considered first-rate bearchow (nuts, berries and similar unsavories). Instead, he and Boo-Boo spent all their time involved in "sting" operations centering on filching picnic baskets and outwitting the Ranger in the park.

But Yogi always did it, and do you know why, boys and girls?

Because he was, in his own inarguable estimation: "smarter than the average bear."

Okay, now get ready for a bearish character who has gone Yogi and Boo-Boo several thousand steps better. In fact, Bentley, star of Atari's dandy new coin-op, **Crystal Castles**, is smarter than the average brain surgeon. For one thing, he has forsaken parks altogether, preferring instead to scour the 16 three-dimensional crystalline mazes that comprise the playfields in this new token-chewer.

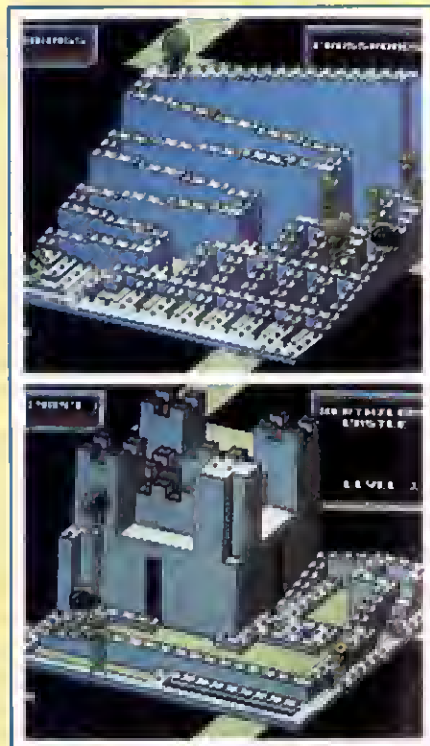
Employing a bottom-lit tracball, something Atari uses with consummate

skill and builds better than virtually anyone in home or arcade gaming, and a pair of "jump" buttons, players send Bentley zipping around the ruby-rimmed walls of the various rack configurations. Passing over a gem collects it, but each level also hosts several antagonistic guardians, whose touch will send Bentley into crystalline oblivion. These undesirables can be avoided in any number of ways, using the topography presented on each rack. They can be vaulted, via the

jump button, or led into cul-de-sacs while Bentley casually hops a passing elevator to the next level.

Whatever happens, pick up the last gem on each rack — if the guardians get them, no bonus points are awarded. You see, heh heh, the guardians actually eat the stones! (Definitely dumber than the average ghost monster.)

The sound and graphics are top-notch, with amazingly little duplication of visual gambits from rack to



Atari's *Crystal Castles* utilizes three-quarter perspective to produce a new twist on maze-chasing. Gamers should bear this in mind when playing.



INSERT COIN HERE

rack. The scenarios are drawn in block-like, three-quarter perspective, giving them the look of Lego blocks constructed into dungeons, crossroads, castles and, a personal favorite, the "Doomsdome". When solid objects, such as buildings and castles, appear on screen, Bentley can actually pass through them, appearing as a partially-visible phantom, able to be eyeballed by gamers, but unseen by the gem-eaters.

But what makes *Crystal Castles* such a solid number is its play value. Man, check out that tracball whirling, Bentley vaulting, hiding, scooping up garnets, all the while pursued by thingies resembling everything from ogres to Tolkien's Ents. Naturally, the ball doesn't give the delicate, cross-hair's precision available with a joystick, but Atari is shrewd enough to know when to sacrifice a little maneuverability for pounds of playing passion.

In terms of the tracball's control — or lack thereof — there are a number of things to remember — first, that this is not your standard maze-chase contest. In other words, your Bentley Bear is not passing through walled-in corridors which only permit him to pass over the gems. It is more

than entirely possible for him to waltz right by the rubies. Make sure he is lined up in such a way as to scoop up the jewels and then hold him on those coordinates come hell, high water or gobble-beasts.

Atari, obviously, is smarter than the average coin-op company. **G**



CRYSTAL CASTLES HOW IT PLAYS:

Players manipulate the protagonist, Bentley Bear, via an illuminated, red tracball (great at arcades that turn down the lights!) controlling full directional movement. Two jump buttons duplicate that function for the benefit of left-handed arcaders as they flank the ball controller.

Also, a little experimentation re-

veals that the jump buttons are also the game's start buttons. This, I admit, took relatively little experimentation. The vanity board has 250 listings for initials and scores, and owners can set it at a quartet of difficulty levels, with the option of providing Bentley with anywhere from three to five lives, so some machines will be more difficult.

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COMPUTER CONTROL

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VIDEOGAME COMICS

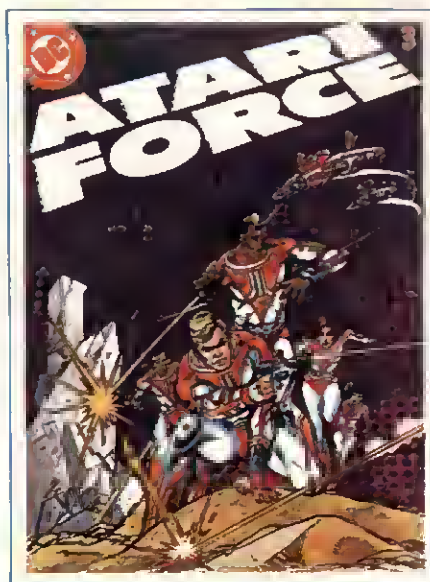
DC and Atari/Included with specially marked software

As the many pop culture streams begin to flow into one another, graphic stories — comic books — are becoming a popular crossover vehicle. This has been especially true of Atari, owned by Warner Communications, which also has DC comics under its corporate wing.

A cute "Centipede" comic was included with that cartridge, and the "Atari Force" mini-sized comics have been turning up on a regular basis in specially marked game cartons.

The writing, by Gerry Conway and Roy Thomas, doesn't display the slightest empathy with videogame concepts and shows a total inability to simulate an electronic gaming experience. In fact, the writing does virtually nothing to even enhance the games.

The art, however, especially in "Atari Force #3, featuring the legendary Gil Kane, is spectacular. Ross Andru returns



DC'S ATARI FORCE COMIC

to the pencils in issue #4 with inker Dick Giordano, doing the finishes.

The writing is shallow, the characterizations are cardboard and the emphasis on mindless explosions and contrived battles is a condescending insult to players everywhere. Certainly somewhere in the mighty DC bullpen lurks a scripter with some feeling for the dynamics of videogames? Let's hope they find someone quick — before videogame comics are written off as unworkable.



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One of the neatest items, however, is a beautifully-rendered "Hall of Fame" sheet that can be wiped clean after each round. Contact the club at: 1700 Walnut St., Philadelphia, PA for their catalog.



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By TRACIE FORMAN

IN CONTROL

THE JOYBOARD

Amiga/Available for Atari VCS, ColecoVision and Atari computers

Like Suncom's *Aerobics Joystick*, Amiga's *Joyboard* gives home arcaders the chance to play videogames and get into shape at the same time. Unlike the *Aerobics Joystick*, the *Joyboard* doesn't require an exercise bike — or any other special equipment — to plug into physical fun.

The idea behind the *Joyboard* is to transfer all joystick movements from the hands to the lower body. It comes

packaged with a free skiing cartridge, *Mogul Maniac*, the perfect choice to show off the controller's many strong points. While the game isn't any great shakes on its own, combined with the *Joyboard*, it becomes the best ski simulation on the market right now.

To use the *Joyboard*, players simply stand on it. It's about the size of an average bathroom scale, but a little wider at the sides. There's ample space for both feet to balance comfortably on, plus a port in the center that can be connected to a conventional joystick

(for use of the action button).

The only drawback to this innovative controller is that it *must* be used on a hard, flat surface. Since most home arcaders do their gaming in the family room, and since most family rooms are carpeted, it does mean a special set-up for satisfying play. Gamers with rugs or carpets in their gaming areas should set this controller up on top of a game board, large book, two-by-four, or the like to retain its full control capacity.

The *Joyboard* works on any game,

THE JOYBOARD (AMIGA)



Gamers Get Physical with Amiga's Joyboard

not just those specially designed for it. By far the best-suited to it is Activision's notorious stick-breaker, *Decathlon*. Talk about a workout! Ever see the "maniac" sequence in the movie *Flashdance*? A few play sessions a day ought to keep any joystick jockey from going to flab. In fact, this reviewer found the *Joyboard* and *Decathlon* so well-suited to each other that she incorporated the videogame into her regular exercise routine!

While there's no doubt that the *Joyboard* is a specialty item, not an all-around game player to be used as a replacement stick, it's one of the best around. Using it with older games adds a new dimension to play-action that might have become monotonous with repetition, and it's a definite attention-grabber at parties and such.

For a real "action" videogame, Amiga's *Joyboard* is the ticket.

THE SUPER CHAMP JC 250

Championship Electronics/
Atari compatible

In an increasingly competitive controller market, some joystick makers have resorted to gimmicks to make their products stand out on crowded store shelves. Championship Electronics has literally added a new twist to the joystick with its *Super Champ's* hollow base, which stores a 10-ft. cord when not in use at the swirl of a joystick.

The *Super Champ* really doesn't need any gimmicks to be a well-designed joystick. Its round, hollow base has four suction cups at the bottom that attach easily to any flat surface. The base has no orientation markings to indicate which way is up, but there's a perfectly good reason: No matter which way the stick faces on its base, "up" is always the position located directly opposite the trigger-style firing button.



THE SUPER CHAMP JC 250 (CHAMPIONSHIP ELECTRONICS)

The stick itself is long and sleek, with horizontal ridges set in along its front. Gamers have a choice between two built-in firing options, one a top-mounted button and the other set trigger-style. Both work equally well. The joystick also spins in its base to release or pull in its connecting wire, eliminating tangled or trailing cords when the

stick is not in use—a nice little feature.

Because of its attached suction cups, *The Super Champ* is especially well-suited for table-top players. Attractively styled in black, with red action buttons, this is a stick that stands out. . . even without its unusual twist.

IN CONTROL

THE UN-ROLLER CONTROLLER

Roklan/Atari compatible

Roklan's *Un-Roller Controllers*, packaged two to a box, are an anomaly in the gourmet joystick market. While *The Un-Roller* bears a striking resemblance to a tracball (a yellow "ball" set in a small blue base), its function is really more like that of a standard joystick. The major difference is that instead of moving a stick back and forth to manipulate on-screen objects, gamers press the rounded plastic globe in the desired direction. Unlike a tracball, this "ball" doesn't move at all, remaining still throughout play. A strange idea, especially considering that it offers practically no sensory feedback, except a slight click to acknowledge a movement.

As a joystick substitute, *The Un-Roller Controller* is only adequate. The ball can prove as unmanageable as a standard tracball in fast-action games that require hairpin maneuvers, causing fingers to slip off the controls at crucial times. As an inexpensive

tracball substitute, this controller fares no better. It offers no more precise control than a standard joystick would in games like *Centipede* and *Missile Command*.

The Un-Roller Controller is, unfortunately, a victim of its own design. Part joystick and part tracball, it doesn't really measure up in either category.

THE TRIGA-COMMAND

Electra Concepts/Atari-compatible

The *Triga-Command* looks like an industrial-strength controller, with its thick black shaft and carved-out treads that would have been more at home on a set of snow tires. But despite this joystick's macho appearance, it's made of extremely lightweight plastic. So light, in fact, that the first impression is likely to be that it's too featherweight. It almost feels hollow.

The best feature about the *Triga-Command* is its trigger-style action button, set into a forward-curving stick. This configuration is far more comfortable than either top- or base-



THE TRIGA-COMMAND (ELECTRA CONCEPTS)

mounted buttons, especially during long play sessions. It's a wonder that nobody else thought of it.

But this joystick has its drawbacks, including a few major ones. First and foremost, the stick is so large and unwieldy, that it's hard to hold its base and play at the same time. A joystick this massive would be better suited to a wide, lap-style base, just to balance it properly. Also, it's too light for its size, being too bulky to be comfortably used by a child, yet too insubstantial for a hard-core adult gamer.

The stick itself is very tight, offering a lot of resistance without moving very far. Whether that's a good or bad point depends on the preference of the individual.

Considering the *Triga-Command's* unusual extremes, it actually works very well. It has a quick, accurate response lacking in too many joysticks nowadays. Put it on a lap stand and it's a winner.



UN-ROLLER CONTROLLER (ROKLAN)

CONTROLLER UPDATE

Atari 5200 owners no longer have to content themselves with the 5200 controllers packaged with the unit. Thanks to Newport Controls, super-game fans can take their pick of standard nine-pin controllers that have been available to VCS, ColecoVision, and Commodore computer owners.

For a mere \$10, 5200 owners can purchase a tiny adapter plug that turns any 2600-compatible joystick into a 5200 game-player. Newport Controls also sells a Y-adapter to let gamers retain the pause and reset features from the 5200 sticks, without plugging and unplugging controllers every time they play. If your 5200 dealer doesn't stock the joystick adapter... ask him or her why not!



By THE GAME DOCTOR

Play "20 Questions" with the Microcomputer Medic!

Welcome back, videogame visitors. We've got some heavy duty ailments to solve this time, but first allow your humble joystick shaman to cast off this crusty exterior and let loose with a few "thank you's" to gamers across the country. The doc has really been touched by the hoardes of wonderful mail pouring into the offices of **Electronic Games**. The Game Nurse has been the only adversely affected party: She has to bring it all back to the office here every day. I may have to cash in all those lovely arcade tokens you've all been sending and buy the poor woman a forklift!

But seriously, it warms my heart to see the good humor, warmth and sincerity these letters overflow with. I especially liked the kid who sent a quarter "to use in playing the game of your choice."

I'd like to say a special hi to my pal Angie down in Florida and end this sentimental stuff by awarding our monthly t-shirt to David Vinton of lovely Hawaii. David designed a special insignia for yours truly that may well become part of the Game Doctor's persona. He even included a great letter, so go, David, go!

Q: I was wondering: what is this thing called "1-800-VIDKIDS", the telephone number mentioned in *EG*? Also, I was reading a friend's game magazine (not as good as yours) and they had an ad for "The Hotline" at the end of the ad. Can you give me some info?

(David Vinton, Hawaii)

A: Info, t-shirts, you can have it all, David, as far as the mad medico is concerned — I love that insignia. As

for the ad, it's from Parker for **Super Cobra** and its affiliated contest for winning a genuine flight jacket. Other details appeared in the November '83 issue of this worthy magazine.

As for anything appearing in "The Hotline", whatever that is (name sounds sort of familiar, however — maybe they're the same guys who run an imitation of the doc's column, cleverly redubbed "A&Q"), now that's original.

Q: If companies such as Coleco, Atari and Mattel can make noises come out of cartridges without any adapter, then why can't they make a word or even a sentence come out without a special voice module?

(Michael Benson, Akron, OH)

A: There are plenty of technical reasons why the existing systems are incapable of simulating the human voice. Mattel's Intellivision *did*, in fact, offer a barely discernable "You're out!" in their **Major League Baseball**, but the clumsy articulation is the most obvious answer to your question: there is a world of difference between noises and speech. Just ask any cat.

But as a doctor in all seriousness, bleeps and boops require a lot less

from a microprocessor than imitation of highly evolved and sophisticated human voice capability. The computer needs to actually store within its memory banks all the possible sounds that can be assembled and reassembled to form words, and that involves a lot of memory.

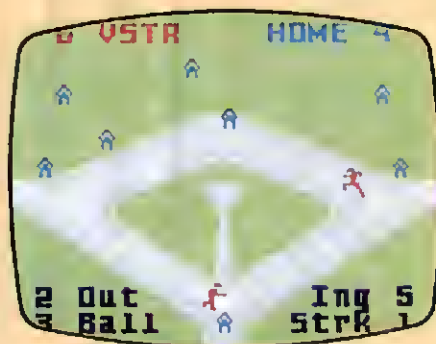
Q: I am thinking of buying a Vectrex system and would like to know if any companies are going to be making game software for this system — or will Vectrex make an adapter module to enable it to play Atari games?

(Clint Read, Address unknown)

A: The thing is, Clint, the reason that your Vectrex comes with its own monitor is the very reason why neither of your proposals will likely ever come to pass. You see, in the world of videogames, there are two scanning methods used to reproduce graphic images on a monitor. Your home television set and most arcade games employ a system known as raster scan, in which dots are connected over a macro-matrix in order to create the illusion of a solid line. Vector graphics was developed by an independent inventor who sold the rights to Cinematronics, the California coin-op company famous for such games as **Star Castle**, **StarHawk** (the first classic vector videogame) and the new laser disc sensation, **Dragon's Lair**.

In order to produce a vector game, however, it is necessary to use a special monitor capable of rendering the clean, bright "etch-a-sketch" type lines that is the trademark of these games.

What GCE did was buy up as many vector monitors as possible after the rage for vector coin-ops began to



BASEBALL (Intellivision)

wane, and then based a videogame system on it. The manufacturer has done a marvelous job of publishing a diversity of first-rate software. One GCE title, *Cosmic Chasm*, is now a licensed coin-op from Cinematronics! This year, owners of the system will even be able to get a light pen and a



COSMIC CHASM (VECTREX)



STARHAWK (VECTREX)

game-building system that enables players to do some wild visual tricks.

Again, however, since this is not a raster monitor and Atari games require raster scan in order to display, a 2600 adapter looks unlikely.

Still, with everything the system currently has to offer, there's not a lot to complain about. The Vectrex is, basically, the perfect "second system".

Q: First off, I want to say: You dudes put out a great magazine! But I do have one idea for you. How about publishing the names of the people who send you tokens from arcades around the country. That way more



people would send you tokens and they would get to see their names in *EG*, too. Everyone would be happy, especially me, since I have sent at least a dozen tokens so far. . .

(Jeff Goldstone, Danville, CA)

A: Jeff, there's an irresistible logic to your letter that absolutely prohibits me from even offering mild resistance. While it would not be practical to publish the names of *all* the fantastic folk who've sent the old Doc tokens from their favorite arcades, here's at least a partial list: Thanks to Jeff Goldstone for his tokens and a letter that brightened my day considerably. Now, I hope that makes everybody happy!

Q: Doc, I am an Atari 2600 owner and have recently purchased *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Astroblast* for \$4.99 apiece. My friends and I think these games are of high quality. If so, why are they being sold at such reduced prices?

(Steve Ciampaglia, Chicago, IL)

A: The world of bargain basement videogames is a lot like the old record bins at Woolworths: mostly dross, but definitely gems to be found among the rubble. Of course, one gamer's fave rave can be another's hate object, so check out what the critics have to say when the titles are released, try to get a gander at the playfield and assume that you aren't taking a heavy risk at under ten dollars for a game cartridge.

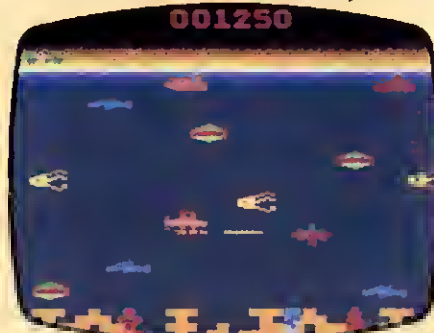
As for why these games can be had so cheaply, it's quite simple. They didn't sell. As the videogame biz begins to ever more closely parallel the record industry, most distributors work under a hits mentality. Games frequently are not given an opportunity to "find their audience," as they



SHARK ATTACK (APOLLO)

say in TV-land, what with the already humongous "wall of software" that stares back at the prospective 2600 software buyer. Games either get hot very quickly or cold even quicker.

Some companies — Data Age, Apollo, etc. — have gone out of business and sold their inventory to an



BERMUDA TRIANGLE (DATA AGE)

outfit called "Candyman" who then peddles the titles at cut-rate prices to the electronic bargain basements of America. Other companies, such as Imagic, simply cut the price on their own when a game fails to pan out.

The winners? Those companies that are strong — such as Atari, Activision and, apparently, Parker Brothers — are growing stronger as a result of this shakeout of the industry's weak sisters. Also, gamers get a shot at a lot of fine games at incredible discounts.

The losers are, most notably, the retailers who have just picked up a batch of games listing for 20 or 30 dollars. Suddenly, their product is being hawked across the street at 'Nuttty Sid's' for five bucks.

Still another loser, at least in part, may be the gamer. No longer is there the great videogame herds to gaze upon. Their plastic pelts have been melted down and their chips chucked. Some are lucky enough to be used as doorstoppers.

The bottom line is probably this: Get it while you can, and thank heaven that the likelihood of getting burned on a 30 dollar videogame mongrel has just been drastically reduced.

By the way, Steve, good question!

Q: In your April issue in "The Player's Guide to Coin-Ops", you talked about 3-D games that weren't that good. How come movies and even TV can manage good 3-D but not videogames?

(Name, Address unknown)

A: First off, I gotta tell you that this is a definite T-shirt winning "Q". Alas, if only you had given us your name and address you would've won one!

First, a quick explanation of how 3-D works in film, for example. A scene is shot, simultaneously, by two cameras spaced apart, according to mathematical calculations making them analogous to the distance between the human eyes (the phenomenon that gives us mere mortals the ability to see it... 3-D!) By running back both views of the scene and having viewers observe the scene through two differently colored polarized lenses, an effect of depth could be perceived — sometimes successfully (as in "House of Wax") and other times with disastrous lack of pop (check out "Gorilla At Large" sometime — you'll wonder where the 3-D went).

Okay, so first there's the problem of lenses. This means that the game has to be of the viewscope variety, as in *Subroc* and the early *Battlezones*. Now there's this funny thing about coin-ops — people, non-players, like to stand around and watch while the arcader struts his or her stuff. They learn the game, pick up pointers, or just learn from a bumbler's mistakes.

Viewscape coin-ops tend to isolate the players, discouraging continuous play. Beyond that, remember that computer images are *not* film, and the

technologies required to produce three-dimensional effects (such as the sequenced shutters in the scope on *Subroc*) has yet to be sufficiently refined to create the genuine article.

Q: Okay, guys, now that we've gotten the tantalizing hype, how about some actual hard-nosed evaluation of Coleco's Adam personal computer. I mean, as a ColecoVision owner are you folks seriously telling me that I can get a keyboard, with word processing built in, data storage drive (whatever that is) with slots for the new software as well as existing C-V games "and" a letter-quality daisy-wheel printer for \$400!!!!!!?

Is this magic — or just sleight of hand, Doc? What's the story?
(Dean Rhoades, Eatontown, NJ)

A: No soft soap for you, eh Dean? Okay, so I'll toss out my bedside manner (let's just hope it doesn't land on anyone in the street...) and give you the straightest answer I can.

According to EG's Technical Editor, Henry B. Cohen, it will be plausible, economically, for Coleco to produce the Adam, with limited profit margins, for the prices mentioned. Printer

speed should be way down from original specs, probably closer to 7-8 characters per second, about the speed of a good typist. Letter quality daisy wheel style printers are already available for under \$500.

Alas, as of this date (September 1, 1983), you, our readers, know the answers the Doc can only guess at. We have yet to have some good old hands-on contact with the Adam while, by the time this sees print, the public almost certainly will have.

The bottom line is quality. Not just a computers features matter, the quality of those features is what really matters. Will the Data Storage Drive, a tape-format version of the disc drive, work consistently and load quickly? Will the computer really have 80K of RAM? These are questions you readers can answer better than this digital doc.

Coleco has already pre-sold its first half-million system run—but then, wouldn't you buy an 80K computer with built-in word processing, data drive, backward compatibility modem access and a letter-quality printer?

In the meanwhile, the minute we know, you'll hear us bellowing from the rafters. G

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By JOYCE WORLEY

Watch Out for the Gators in Donkey Kong II!

DONKEY KONG II

Nintendo/\$39.95

When Mario rescued his lady love from the clutches of the giant ape, he imprisoned poor Donkey Kong in a huge packing crate, then sent him back to the jungle. But the callous carpenter didn't really turn the mighty monkey loose to roam the forests; the chimp is still chained high atop a cliff overlooking the treetops. Now it's up to Donkey Kong Junior to rescue his papa. The little simian has to make his way across crocodile-infested rivers, over treacherous electrified wire bridges, then swing on vines up to where his daddy stands helplessly chained. It's a tricky course for a young chimp, but he inherited a fearless heart from his father, so with a helping hand from the gamer, he is certain to win through.

Arcaders everywhere took to heart the ape-ish antics of *Donkey Kong* and *Donkey Kong Junior*, following the mighty monkeys from their birthplaces in the pay-for-play palaces, to the home videogame versions, all the way to tabletop stand-alone games that miniaturized the madness. *Donkey Kong II* now leaps into the palm of the gamer's hand, in this dual-screened compact-style game from Nintendo.

Nintendo spread the jungle over two screens for double the fun. The

adventure starts in the bottom left corner of the lower LCD viewing window. Junior must scramble up the vines and grab the key, then toss it up to the top screen. Then he makes his way across the river, avoiding the snapping crocodile jaws, and climbs up the ropes to the narrow wire bridge over the chasm. But the bridge is electrified, and sparks travel up and down its length. The little ape must leap over them until he crosses the river and crawls up the vines to the second screen. On the upper level, Junior has to grab the key he threw up a moment before, and toss it up to where his father is imprisoned. The key flies through the air to one of the four locks that bind Big Daddy, and Junior has to climb up vines to reach that particular latch. Then the key returns to the starting point, so Junior must return to the river and begin over again until he has undone all four latches.

On the lower screen, Junior must carefully choose the moment he jumps up for the key, to avoid the snapping jaws patrolling the river. An ill-timed leap is fatal, since even the barest touch of one of the gators dooms the monkey. But that's only half his problem. If Junior leaps into the air while the electricity is sparking on the wire bridge over his head, the shock will kill him. Part of what makes *Donkey Kong II* more challenging than

the typical handheld LCD game are these overhead threats. Even when Junior makes it past the electrified bridge to the second screen, it's not all bananas for the little monk. The second screen also is filled with dreaded snap-jaws and vicious birds that fly around as he clammers up the vine, trying to knock him off balance.

About the only edge that Junior has over his enemies is his speed. The instant the game comes on, immediately leap our hero up to get the key, then scurry across the river without wasting any time. By executing this maneuver quickly, the gamer can avoid the snap-jaws since they don't appear for the first few seconds of the game. Also, the sparks don't begin flying down the wire bridge for several moments, so speedy play at this point might get Junior all the way to the second screen with no major unfriendly encounters. However, by the time he pokes his little head up to the second screen, the jungle is awake and ready to devour him. Snapping teeth threaten him from the instant he reaches the second level, and those pesky birds bedevil him. The palm-player has to take great care (when leaping over snapjaws) not to jump right into the flight pattern of the buzzards.

When it's all over and

Junior finally frees father, everyone is so happy. Kong leaps from the cliff, where he stood prisoner for so long, down to the river bank and a loving Junior catches him in his arms. Then the contest begins all over again.

Junior scores a point each time he jumps over a spark or snapjaw. The number of points for undoing a lock varies from five to 15, depending on how much time it takes. When Kong is finally free, Junior gets another 20 points, and if he can get back to the starting point and the key, there's a five point bonus. When the score reaches 300, if there have been any misses, the gamer gets another Junior.

If there have been no misses to that point, the game goes into "chance time" and all points are awarded at double value until a miss is scored.

Game A is relatively easy to play. When Junior opens a lock, the birds and snapjaws disappear from the upper screen, making it much easier for him to get back to the starting point. In Game B, these villains stay on-screen to give him a bad time. Both levels require pretty good hand-eye coordination and an excellent sense of timing to avoid leaping into one danger when jumping over another.

Donkey Kong II, with its double screen, really has double-the-action. The ape and his enemies are nicely cartooned, and all the non-moving parts of the graphics are painted to add colorful touches to the LCD screens.

The contest is pleasingly challenging and the compact-style case is easy to carry.

Donkey Kong II is also an alarm clock, so it's a nice gift for anyone who needs a time-piece. Not only is it a good accurate pocket-watch with alarm built in, but it'll provide plenty of fun while

the gamer is waiting for time to pass.

So, get on out there and save the old man and watch your timing.

DR. DENTAL

Bandai Electronics/\$14.95

Here's something that almost makes a trip to the dentist sound like fun. Bandai's *Dr. Dental* turns oral hygiene into a vest-pocket (2-by 3-1/2 in.) diversion that makes tooth care amusing. Gamers try to stop germs from chewing away the front teeth of the unfortunate on-screen character.

The doctor races back and forth across the bottom of the screen, attempting to halt germs attacking four front teeth in the patient's mouth. This toothy Tom sits spread-jawed in seeming terror as germs jump around his mouth, trying to decay his precious molars. But he does have a friend in *Dr. Dental*, the hard-working dentist armed with a disinfectant-filled atomizer who's working hard to save each tusk by spraying a jet of mouthwash onto the germs.

Dr. Dental bounces back and forth across the screen, trying to get a clear shot at each gnawing microbe. The most serious are the dangerous tooth decayers. These nasty villains blacken a third of a tooth upon touch. After three assaults by decay, the molar completely disappears, leaving a black gaping hole in the patient's smile. When this happens, the unhappy patient bursts into tears, and a "miss" mark shows that *Dr. Dental* has lost one precious charge. Then the teeth reappear, fresh and renewed, and *Dr. Dental* continues his crusade to deflect bicuspid disaster for as long as possible, racking up scores for each germ dispatched, until the nasty things destroy another fang.

The game ends when three teeth are totted away by the germs.

There would be no trick to halting this oral mischief if the tooth decay germs were the only problem. Meanwhile, racing back and forth across the bottom of the mouth is another bacteria, the interference germ, blocking the antiseptic sprayed toward the decay. Gamers must either first dispatch the interference germ, before fighting tooth decay, or else time their shots of mouthwash to avoid the interfering microbes.

Arcaders score 20 points for each



successful attack against a tooth decay germ, and 10 points for knocking out the interference. There's a 500 point bonus for every 1000 scored.

This is a very simple game incorporating easy play-action. The dentist bounces from side-to-side, firing mouthwash at the germs. For highest scores, it's best not to chase the interference germs, and just destroy them when they are in the line of fire. The only real danger to the patient is from the tooth-attacking bacteria, so gamers should concentrate on spraying these point-valuable decay germs, to preserve the patient's big smile as long as possible.

Dr. Dental is an attractive handheld that proves a good game doesn't have to be very costly. The action, though uncomplicated, is entertaining and challenging, and makes this the most pleasant visit to a dentist any arcader will ever have.

CHALLENGE GOLF

Bandai Electronics/\$21.95

Challenge Golf offers the armchair duffer a nine-hole course, complete with sand pits, water traps and assorted trees and bushes. Now, it won't matter what season it is or how busy you are. It's always the season for an electronic game, and there's always time for a quick round of your favorite sport.

The hip-pocket game comes in an attractive steel-colored case. Wafer thin, it measures roughly 3- by 6-in. Two LCD screens occupy two-thirds of the face of the game and the lower third contains the controls.

The dual screens hold all the action. The top panel contains an aerial view of the hole from tee to flag with sand pits and water traps in place, bounded by the shrubbery. A small scoreboard in the lower right-hand corner gives the hole number, the par for that hole, and the distance to the flag in meters. While the game is in progress, the scoreboard keeps track of how many shots it takes you to get to the next green.

The lower screen offers a detailed drawing of the hole pictured in the top screen. The golfer stands, club in hand, ready to tee off. The scoreboard indicated that this is hole 1, par 4, and it's 380 meters to the flag. Press the action button to start his swing, then again when the backswing is big enough. As the club travels toward the ball, hit the button again to make him complete the shot. The upper screen



indicates where the ball lands on the fairway, and how many meters it is from the green. The bottom screen pictures the golfer in his new location on the course, ready to take another shot.

After each hole is completed, the scoreboard shows how well you did, and then advances to the next fair-



CHALLENGE GOLF (BANDAI ELECTRONICS)

way. Each hole is different on this course, and it takes special strategies on each to get through with the lowest score.

When two golfers compete, the unit tracks each person's score automatically, and the gamers take turns, just as they would on the links.

There's a lot of skill required to play *Challenge Golf* well. Par can be difficult to attain on this course, and it's even harder to beat. The amount of backswing the golfer gives to his club determines how far the ball will travel, of course, and there are actually 12 graduations in the backswing to help the electronic golfer put exactly the

right amount of muscle behind the ball. There's a lot of difference in how each hole should be played. For example, woods surround hole two (530 meters, par five). Too much of a swing on the club on this hole, and you're certain to end up in the rough.

Various musical tones reward accomplishments or signal problems, such as when the ball goes into a sand trap, or sails out of bounds. Getting a birdie sets off a musical salute, and each new game starts with a hopeful fanfare.

SPACE INVADERS

Tiger Electronic Toys/\$30

Thundering toward Earth from the skies are hordes of alien invaders packed in close formation, steadily stomping down the horizon toward the planet. There's not much standing between earth and annihilation; just a cannon, and whatever courage you can muster to stand off the foe. It's not an easy job, but someone's got to do it!

Space Invaders first marched its way into the United States from the Orient after conquering Japan. The monsters hadn't much more than landed in this country before they were well on the way to defeating us, too. The first of the hit arcade video supergames, Taito's coin-op quickly became this country's hottest quarter-stealer, and introduced an entire generation of arcaders to the world of electronic gaming. Since that time, *Space Invaders* became the theme for many different games. A number of companies brought out their own licensed versions of the classic game. Entex marketed an outstanding version in a table-top format, and Atari produced a great translation of the game for the Model 2600 Atari VCS.

Now Tiger Toys has taken inspiration from the marching monsters for its newest hand arcade game. Tiger successfully reduced *Space Invaders* to mini-size, so gamers don't have to miss any of the fun even if they're not near a pay-for-play machine or a home videogame console.

The vest-pocket version (2½-in. by 4½-in.) boasts an LCD screen that's filled with color. Tiger put a thrilling orange sky over the orb of the serene blue Earth. This is the panoramic backdrop for the alien invaders, as they march down the sky toward our planet. There are five aliens in each column, and these nasties mean business! They rain bombs down on



SPACE INVADERS (TIGER)

the cannon, quickly destroying the defense shields. The gamer has three cannon, and when these are destroyed, there's nothing to stop the hurtling hordes from landing on Earth and destroying civilization.

The arcader controls his cannon with a two-direction control button. The same button can also be used to fire the cannon, or a separate control just beneath the screen also fires the cannon. Some gamers will find it easier to control the cannon movement with one hand on the two-direction button, and use the other hand to fire the missiles.

Play-action is straight forward and uncomplicated. Fire the laser cannon at the rows of advancing meanies, blasting them out of the sky. But don't forget to dodge the bad guys' missiles. A good rule to remember when playing *Space Invaders* is, never stand still. Keep moving, but don't blunder into the path of a bullet.

All of the successful strategies that work on the coin-op version can be adapted to this mini-arcade. Concentrate on taking out the end rows of invaders first. Don't shoot all the aliens in the center and be left with two clumps of monsters on each side of the screen, then having to dart back and forth between the two. It's better to destroy all the bad guys from each end of the formation, leaving one tightly packed group right in the middle.

Afterwards clear off the remaining aliens with dispatch, before they get too near the bottom of the screen.

This version of *Space Invaders* has eight game variations that may seem familiar to arcaders who've played it in other formats, including fixed and moving shields, slow or fast bombs, visible and invisible invaders. There's a two-player version of each variation, and the unit automatically tracks each person's score.

If you're looking for a small diversion to while away some time, search no further. Tiger's *Space Invaders* is just the thing for those rainy afternoons when you're waiting for your bus. Just pull it out of your pocket, and have a ball! Earth is counting on you!

MONTY PLAYS SCRABBLE BRAND CROSSWORD GAME

Ritam Corporation/\$149.95

There's hardly a home in the country without a standard, non-electronic Scrabble game laying back in some closet — or Scrabble® Brand Crossword Game as Selchow & Righter Company insists we call it in order to preserve the trademark. This intriguing word game has entertained families all around the world and is probably second only to Parker Brothers' Monopoly as the all-time favorite family board game. It's estimated there are currently some 33 million active players in this country alone — and no one knows how many ex-

players gave up the game because they had no suitable opponents.

That's always been the problem with the Scrabble® Brand Crossword Game. Although ideal for competition between two or more players, the fun stops when the rest of the gang goes home. Unfortunately, the most ardent wordgamer in the world has to turn a cold shoulder on Scrabble when there's no one else around to share the fun.

Now all that has changed, thanks to an iconoclastic lowain, Robert Walls, who wanted to invent a family-oriented game for the computer age. Two programmers, Jonathan Isbit and David Matt, agreed this was a good idea. They formed Ritam Corporation, and the development of the world's first portable computer version of Scrabble followed soon after.

Monty Plays Scrabble Brand Crossword Game is the end result. It is a portable computerized opponent that assigns tiles, keeps score, and competes with up to three humans. *Monty* has a 12,000 word vocabulary that expands to 44,000 words by adding modules. The unit provides challenging opposition for human gamers in four different skill levels.

To play with this technological marvel, first dig your old non-electronic Scrabble game out of the closet. *Monty Plays Scrabble* displays each word on its small (1½ by 1 in.) LCD screen, and human players then place tiles on the regular playing board as instruct-



MONTY?

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ed. The computer console also comes with a special paper score pad so gamers can simply write the words down. In most instances, this is actually easier than using the regular Scrabble set and tiles.

The game itself is self-instructing to operate. Even an eight-year-old should have no difficulty playing it right from the start. Turn on the unit, and the window flashes, "Welcome! My name is Monty." Then it inquires, "Who sits left of Monty?" The gamer enters the first name, let's say "Charlene". Monty asks, "Who sits left of Charlene?" Enter "Tracie", and the machine asks, "Who sits left of Tracie?" Enter the third name, "Joyce," and the machine asks, "Who goes first?"

The next question deals with drawing tiles. If you wish to select your own tiles in the normal fashion, the

machine asks each player to enter the tiles into his memory at this point. If Monty is drawing them himself, he'll signal each opponent individually, asking the player to enter for tiles. The player pushes the "enter" button and is assigned seven tiles to write down or try to remember. Another push of the button then signals Monty that it's the next player's turn for tiles.

Once everyone has their letters, Monty asks which of the four skill levels to use. At the easiest setting, most people won't have too much trouble proving man's superiority over machine. At the top level, Monty gets a lot smarter and can challenge most wordgame enthusiasts.

After selecting the skill level, the computer starts the game, asking the first player to begin. If she's forgotten her tiles, pressing "enter" delivers the message. Type in her word, and Monty asks if it's across or down. Then Monty displays the word on the LCD screen, for the gamer to reposition as desired. Monty calculates the score for that word, asks the player to approve or disapprove it (giving a chance to change the play, challenge its legality, or dispute its placement), then assigns replacement tiles for the letters used.

The game continues with the console passing from player to player in rotation and Monty monitoring the tiles and scores until all three contestants have had their turns. Then Monty plays his own letters, printing out his word selection. First he "thinks," and the length of time this takes varies from several seconds at the lowest skill level, to three minutes at the top setting. At the upper levels, Monty goes on thinking even after he's found a word, trying to come up with better scoring combinations. A countdown on screen lets the gamers know how much time is left, but interrupting Monty at any time during his thinking process causes him to play the first combination he can come up with. Interrupting before he's found a word makes him pass his turn.

Monty plays a satisfying game of Scrabble, showing a pleasant personality throughout the game. He congratulates his opponents on good plays, and even serenades them with a few bars of music. Monty knows several tunes, including "The 1812 Overture", "This Train is Bound for Glory", "Sailor's Horn Pipe", "Hail to the Chief" and the opening from Beethoven's "Fifth Symphony." Unfortunately, his musical expertise is largely

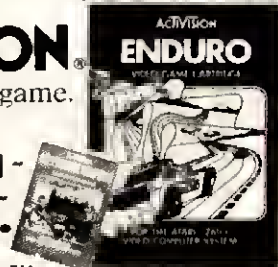
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wasted since Monty has such a puny voice that it's hard to even hear his melodies.

Aside from his weak voice, there isn't much else wrong with Monty. All the options players might experience in the non-electronic game are present in this mini-microprocessor. Monty lets gamers use blank tiles, exchange their tiles, pass a turn, or even end the game prematurely just by pressing a button. Monty even gives hints to gamers who get stuck. If his tiny voice worries the player, it can be turned off altogether.

Monty's vocabulary is very good, but of course he doesn't know everything, so gamers can challenge his words. Monty meekly accepts their decisions about the legality of his plays, and apologizes for making the error. If Monty challenges a word played by a human, he automatically accepts the human's guarantees of the validity of the word, then skips the next turn as penalty for wrongly questioning the play.

Monty Plays Scrabble is probably more trouble than it's worth for multiple human gamers. It's very cumbersome to pass the console from player to player, and instead of speeding the contest, it actually slows down the action. Since all moves must be entered onto the playing board anyhow, it doesn't accomplish anything to enter them into the computer first. There might be some instances where a fourth player is needed for some specific reason, and at those times Monty is always ready to compete. But, generally speaking, there's no special advantage to using the console for games between humans.

Monty comes into his own when there's no one around to challenge. He's a good dependable opponent who'll provide a run for the money for all but the most highly skilled players. The portable computer console is like having another person along when you want a game to help pass the time.

Everyone loves Selchow & Righter's Scrabble Brand Crossword Game, but up until now there was just no way to play if you didn't have someone with you. Now, thanks to Ritam Corporation, *Monty Plays Scrabble* provides the perfect answer.

The manufacturer has produced a heavy-duty unit that provides a first rate gaming experience. This is definitely one for solo gamers to investigate closer.



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CHALLENGE GOLF

There are two buttons and two slide switches that control all the action in *Challenge Golf*. Push the orange button to switch the game from time mode to game, then use the slides to turn the sound on or off, and to set it for one- or two-person play. Pushing the start button begins the game, and par for the hole, and the distance from tee to green is shown in the time-window. Swing by pushing the start button, then use the start button again to stop the back swing depending on how long a shot you're trying to make. When the



club approaches the ball, hit the start button (for the third time) to connect with the ball and complete the shot. The upper screen shows where the ball has landed, and how many yards to the green, and the bottom screen changes to correspond with your position on the fairway.

To set the time, hit the ACL button, then use player one option and the start button to set the hour, and player two option and the start button to set minutes. Hit the orange select button when the correct time is set.

DR. DENTAL

Five buttons control all the action in *Dr. Dental*. The switch at the upper left turns the sound on or off. The red button centered on the left-hand side of the unit chooses the function, either Game One, Game Two or Time. Game One holds the action to a moderate pace, but Game Two speeds it up quite a bit. Both contests retain the high score to date, flashed on-screen when the game is selected. In Time mode, *Dr. Dental* is a



clock. The scoring window shows the hour, while the game stays in demonstration mode to produce a highly animated display on-screen. The two buttons on the right start the game, then move Dr. Dental back and forth on-screen. These buttons also adjust the hour and minutes to set the time. Finally, the bottom button on the left fires salvos of mouthwash straight up from the dentist's location on-screen, toward the germs in the patient's mouth. The unit operates on two LR44 (hearing aid-style) batteries, readily available in most stores, that should keep *Dr. Dental* running for about a year.



MONTY PLAYS SCRABBLE

All the options for play are contained right on the keypad of the portable computer console. The letters for typing words are arranged in alphabetical order, so you don't have to be familiar with a typewriter keyboard. Cursors on letters C, G, I, and M move words into correct position for play, A tells Monty the word is going across, and D lets him

SPACE INVADERS

Use the slide switch to choose one- or two-player mode, and to set the sound on or off, then the game select button for the contest preferred. Push the demo button for a computer-show of how the game goes, then push it



again to reset and start play. A fire button looses bolts of energy toward the enemies in the sky, and the four-pointed star in the center of the control panel is the direction control. Push the left or right points of the star to move your cannon left or right, then loose the missiles by pushing the upper point, or by using the fire button, depending on whether you want to use one or two hands to control the play action.

know to place it reading down the board. The letter E ends the competition at any time, and letter H asks Monty for a hint. P lets a player pass his turn, and Q puts Monty into quiet mode. Pressing S asks Monty for a current read-out of scores. W tells Monty to wait while gamers set up special problem plays. X means exchange tiles, N means no, and Y means yes. Across the bottom of the board are keys for blank letters, an erase key and the all important Enter key that is used in every conversation with the microcomputer. The option key lets Monty know you want to use some of the special options, like getting a hint, ending the game prematurely, changing the skill level during the game in progress, or disengaging any mod that Monty has (effectively limiting his vocabulary).

Coming Attractions

PLAYERS GUIDE TO SCIENCE FICTION GAMES

Explore the galaxy without ever leaving your home with a broad array of science fiction videogames and computer simulations. **EG's** magazine-within-a-magazine focuses on the hottest new futuristic titles, from thrill-a-minute action contests to mind-bending adventures.

THE ILLUSTRATED COMPUTER GAMING DICTIONARY

Every hobby has its specialized terms, and electronic gaming has more of them than most. If you have trouble keeping RAM and ROM straight, this compilation is sure to end the confusion.

THE TRUE STORY BEHIND ODYSSEY'S VIDEOGAME PULL-OUT

More than one company has left the

hotly competitive videogame field recently. None of the casualties has a pedigree as long or illustrious as Odyssey's. Why did this pioneer videogame publisher cash in its chips? Get the behind-the-scenes story next month!

HALL OF FAME VOTING

Is your favorite game ready to join the select circle of all-time classics? It can, if you send in the annual Hall of Fame ballot

which will be included with the March issue of **EG**. Here's your chance to really voice your choice.

TOPS & FLOPS OF 1983

The year just ended was an incredible one for electronic gaming. The editors of **EG** have picked some high- and low-lights, the events which help make the hobby what it is today, and here they are...

There'll be plenty of other exciting articles and features of interest to arcaders, plus these regular columns:

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Interaction between the readers and editors of **Electronic Games** helps make this a better magazine. The more we here at **EG** know about who you are and what you want to read, the better we can satisfy your needs and desires. That's why we run a Reader Poll in every single issue of this magazine. Rest assured that even though we protect the anonymity of every respondent to our survey, the editor personally reads each and every ballot received. And of course, this is also your ballot for casting your vote for the most popular videogames, computer game programs and coin-op arcade machines.

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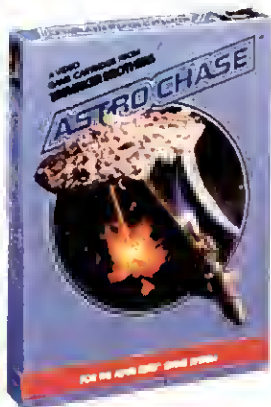
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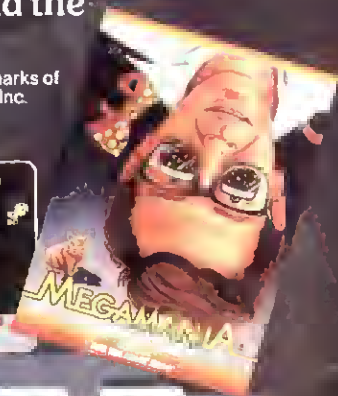
They've organized those ice cream sandwiches you left in the back of the freezer, the dice you said were bad luck.

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